THE

PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,

DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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ISAIAH.

Exposition and Homiletics

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Homilies by Various Authors.

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VOL. I.

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THE
BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. On the Personality of Isaiah.

Isaiah's name. The name borne by this great prophet was really *Yĕsha'-yâhu*, which signifies "the Salvation of Jehovah." The name was not an uncommon one. It was borne by one of the heads of the singers in the time of David (1 Chron. xxv. 3, 15), by a Levite of the same period (1 Chron. xxvi. 25), by one of the chief men who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra (Ezra viii. 7), by a Benjamite mentioned in Nehemiah (xi. 7), and others. The form may be compared with that of *Khizki-yâhu*, or Hezekiah, which meant "the Strength of Jehovah," and *Tsidki-yâhu*, or Zedekiah, which meant "the Righteousness of Jehovah." It was one of singular appropriateness in the case of the great prophet, since "the salvation of Jehovah" was the subject which Isaiah was especially commissioned to set forth.

His parentage and family. Isaiah was, as he tells us repeatedly (ch. i. 1; ii. 1; xiii. 1, etc.), "the son of Amoz." This name must not be confounded with that of the Prophet Amos, from which it differs both in its initial and in its final letter. Amoz, according to a Jewish tradition, was a brother of King Amaziah; but this tradition can scarcely be authentic, since it would make Isaiah too old. Amoz was probably not a man of any high distinction, since he is never mentioned excepting as Isaiah's father. Isaiah was married, and his wife was known as "the prophetess" (ch. viii. 3), which, however, does not necessarily imply that the prophetic gift had been bestowed upon her. It may have been, as it was upon Deborah (Judg. iv. 4) and upon Huldah (2 Kings xxii. 14—20); or she may have been called "the prophetess" simply as being the wife of "the prophet" (ch. xxxviii. 1). Isaiah tells us that he had two sons, Shear-jashub and

Maher-shalal-hash-baz, whose names are connected with his prophetical office. Shear-jashub was the elder of the two by many years.

His date. The prophet tells us that he "saw a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah" (ch. i. 1). It would follow from this, that, even if he began his prophetic career as early as the twentieth year of his age, he must have been born twenty years before Uzziah's death, or in B.C. 779. He certainly lived till the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, or B.C. 714, and probably outlived that monarch, who died in B.C. 699–8. It is not unlikely that he was even contemporary for some years with Manasseh, Hezekiah's son; so that we may, perhaps, assign him, conjecturally, the space between B.C. 780 and B.C. 690, which would give him a lifetime of ninety years.

His position. That Isaiah was a Jew of good position, dwelling at Jerusalem, and admitted to familiar intercourse with the Jewish monarchs, Ahaz and Hezekiah, is sufficiently apparent (ch. vii. 3—16; xxxvii. 21—35; xxxviii. 1—22; xxxix. 3—8). Whether or no he was brought up in the "schools of the prophets" is uncertain; but he must have received his call at a very early age, probably when he was about twenty. That he was historiographer at the Hebrew court during the reign of Jotham, and again during the reign of Hezekiah, appears from the Second Book of Chronicles (xxvi. 22; xxxii. 32). In this capacity he wrote an account of the reign of Uzziah, and also one of the reign of Hezekiah for the "Book of the Kings." He may also have written accounts of the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, but this is not stated. His main office was that of prophet, or preacher to both king and people; and the composition of his numerous and elaborate prophecies, which are poems of a high order, must have furnished him with continual occupation. It is not certain that we possess all his prophecies; for the book, as it has come down to us, has a fragmentary character, and appears to be a compilation.

His call. Isaiah relates, in his sixth chapter, a very solemn call which he received from God "in the year that King Uzziah died." It is thought by some that this was his original call to the prophetical office.[1] But the majority of commentators are of a different opinion. They note that the original call of a prophet, where recorded, naturally occupies the first place in his work, and that there is no conceivable reason for Isaiah's having postponed to his sixth chapter an account of an event which *ex hypothesi* preceded his first. It would follow that the original call of the prophet is unrecorded, as is the case with most prophets; *e.g.* Daniel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

His prophetic career. The career of Isaiah as a prophet commenced, as he tells us, in the reign of King Uzziah, or Azariah. It is a reasonable supposition that it began late in that monarch's reign, but still a year or two before its close. Uzziah was at that time a leper, and "dwelt in

[1] De Wette, 'Einleitung in das Alt. Test.,' § 207.

a several house," Jotham his son being regent and having the direction of affairs (2 Kings xv. 5; 2 Chron. xxvii. 21). Isaiah's early prophecies (ch. i.—v.) were probably written at this time. "In the year that King Uzziah died" (ch. vi. 1)—probably, but not certainly, before his death[1]—Isaiah saw the vision recorded in ch. vi., and received thus a fresh designation to his office under circumstances of the deepest solemnity. It is remarkable, however, that we cannot assign any of his extant writings, except ch. vi., to the next period of sixteen years. Apparently, during the reign of Jotham he was silent. But with the accession of Jotham's son Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah (B.C. 743), commenced a period of prophetic activity. The prophecies from ch. vii. 1 to ch. x. 4 have a structural connection and a unity of purpose which unite them into a single body, and belong manifestly to the portion of the reign of Ahaz when he was engaged in the Syro-Ephraimite war. A prophecy in ch. xiv. (vers. 28—32) is assigned by the writer to the last year of the same king. Hitherto the prophetic energy of Isaiah had, seemingly, been fitful and spasmodic, but from henceforth it proceeded to flow in a steady continuous stream. There are sufficient grounds for assigning to the reign of Hezekiah the entire series of prophecies following upon ch. x. 5, with the single exception of the short "Burden of Palestine," dated in Ahaz's last year. The contents of these prophecies tend to spread them over the different periods of Hezekiah's reign, and show us the prophet constantly active throughout its entire duration. Whether Isaiah's prophetic career lasted still longer, extending into the earlier part of the reign of Manasseh, is doubtful. A portion of the prophecies contained in his book are thought by some to belong to Manasseh's time,[2] and Jewish tradition places his death under Manasseh. Our conjectural estimate of his lifetime, as falling between B.C. 780 and B.C. 690, would make him contemporary with Manasseh for the space of nine years.

His death. The tradition of the rabbis concerning Isaiah's death placed it in the reign of Manasseh, and declared it to have been a most horrible and painful martyrdom.[3] Isaiah, having resisted some of Manasseh's idolatrous acts and ordinances, was seized by his orders, and, having been fastened between two planks, was killed by being "sawn asunder." The mention of this mode of punishment in the Epistle to the Hebrews is thought by many to be an allusion to Isaiah's fate (Heb. xi. 37).

His character. Isaiah's temper is one of great earnestness and boldness. He lives under five kings, of whom one only is of a religious and God-

[1] Dr. Kay says the phrase means "after his death" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. v. p. 67); but he adduces no proof. To us the probability seems the other way. Why mention Uzziah at all, unless he was on the throne? Why not say, "In the first year of Jotham"?

[2] Ewald, 'History of Israel,' vol. v. p. 15, note 4.

[3] 'Jebamoth,' xlix. 2; 'Sanhedr.,' ciii. 2. The tradition was accepted as authentic by Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Jerome, and Augustine.

fearing disposition; yet he maintains towards all of them an uncompromising attitude of firmness with respect to all that bears upon religion. He conceals nothing, keeps nothing back, out of a desire for court favour. "Is it a small thing for you to weary men?" he says to one king; "but must ye weary my God also?" (ch. vii. 13). "Set thine house in order," he says to another; "for thou shalt die, and not live" (ch. xxxviii. 1). Yet more bold is he in his addresses to the nobles and the powerful official class, which in his day had the chief direction of affairs, and was most unscrupulous in its treatment of adversaries (2 Chron. xxiv. 17—22; ch. i. 15, 21, etc.). He denounces in the strongest terms their injustice, their oppression, their grasping coveteousness, their sensuality, their pride and haughtiness (ch. i. 10—23; ii. 11—17; iii. 9—15; v. 7—25; xxviii. 7—15, etc.). Nor does he seek to curry favour with the people. It is "the faithful city" itself which has "become an harlot" (ch. i. 21). The nation is "a sinful nation" (ch. i. 4), the people are "laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters" (ch. i. 4). They "draw near to God with their mouth, and with their lips do honour him, but have removed their hearts far from him" (ch. xxix. 13). They are "a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of the Lord" (ch. xxx. 9). But this boldness and severity for God, and uncompromising sternness where his honour is concerned, are counterbalanced by a remarkable tenderness and compassion towards the individuals who fall under notice as having provoked God's anger. Not only does he "weep bitterly," and refuse to be comforted, "because of the spoiling of the daughter of his people" (ch. xxii. 4), but even the woes of a foreign nation, like Moab, draw forth his compassion, and make his "bowels" thrill with sorrow (ch. xv. 5; xvi. 9—11). He detests sin, but he mourns over the fate of sinners. For Babylon itself his "loins are filled with pain: pangs take hold upon him, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: he is bowed down at the hearing; he is dismayed at the seeing; his heart pants; fearfulness affrights him: the night of his pleasure is turned into fear for him" (ch. xxi. 3, 4). And as he sympathizes in the calamities and sufferings of all nations, so has he a heart wide enough, and a spirit comprehensive enough, to delight in their prosperity, their exaltation, their admission to the final kingdom of the Messiah (ch. ii. 2; xi. 10—12; xviii. 7; xix. 23—25; xl. 5; xlii. 1—4; liv. 3, etc.). No narrow views of race-privilege, or even of covenant-advantage, hem him in, and cramp his sympathies and affections. Yet still he is not so cosmopolite as to be devoid of patriotism, or to view with unconcern anything which affects the welfare of his country, his city, his countrymen. Whether it be Syria and Ephraim that plot against Judah, or Sennacherib that seeks to come in and crush her with an overwhelming flood of invasion, he is equally indignant, equally contemptuous (ch. vii. 5; xxxvii. 22). Against Babylon, as the fated destroyer of the holy city and ravager of the Holy Land, he nourishes a deep-seated hostility, which shows itself in almost every section of the

book (ch. xiii. 1—22; xiv. 4—23; xxi. 1—10; xlv. 1—3; xlvi. 1—11; xlvii. 1—15; xlviii. 14, etc.). Again, upon the enemies of God he lets loose, not only a storm of indignation and fierce anger, but also the keen arrows of his sarcasm and irony. A delicate vein of satire runs through the description of female luxury in ch. iii. (vers. 16—24). A bitter sarcasm points the description of Pekah and Rezin—"the two tails of these smoking firebrands" (ch. vii. 4). Against idolaters a somewhat coarser rhetoric is employed: "The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an oak, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god" (ch. xliv. 12—17; comp. Jer. x. 3—16; Baruch vi. 12—49). While the prophet reserves sarcasm for certain rare occasions, he shows himself a thorough master of it, and pours a stream of scorn on those who provoke his scorn, which effectually disposes of their pretensions.

Two other qualities must be noted in Isaiah—his spirituality and his tone of deep reverence. The formal, the outward, the manifest in religion, are with him absolutely of no account; nothing is of importance but the inward, the spiritual, the "hidden man of the heart." Temples are worthless (ch. lxvi. 1); sacrifices are worthless (ch. i. 11—13; lxvi. 3); the observance of days is worthless (ch. i. 14); attendance at assemblies is worthless (ch. i. 13); nothing has any value with God but real purity of life and heart—obedience (ch. i. 19), righteousness, "a poor and contrite spirit" (ch. lxvi. 2). The imagery which he of necessity employs in describing spiritual conditions is drawn from material things, from the circumstances of our earthly environment. But it is plainly not intended in any literal sense. The abundance and variety of the imagery, sometimes the incongruity of one feature with another (ch. lxvi. 24), show that it is imagery—a mere shadowing out of spiritual things by means of trope and figure. And Isaiah's reverence is profound. His most usual title for God is "the Holy One of Israel;" sometimes, still more emphatically, "the Holy One;" once with special elaboration, "the high and lofty One that

inhabiteth eternity" (ch. lvii. 15). God is primarily with him an object of reverent fear and awe. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself," he exclaims; "and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (ch. viii. 13); and again, "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty" (ch. ii. 10). It is as if the memory of his "vision of God" never quitted him—as if he felt himself ever standing before the throne, where he "saw the Lord sitting, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." And the prophet cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (ch. vi. 1—5).

§ 2. On the Historical Circumstances under which Isaiah lived and wrote.

Isaiah grew to manhood as a subject of the Judæan kingdom, during the period of the two kingdoms known respectively as those of Israel and Judah. Israel, the schismatical kingdom established by Jeroboam on the death of Solomon, was approaching to its fall. After existing for two centuries under eighteen monarchs of eight different families, and with some difficulty maintaining its independence against the attacks of its northern neighbour, Syria of Damascus, the Israelitish kingdom was on the point of succumbing to a far greater power, the well-known Assyrian empire. When Isaiah was about ten or twelve years of age, an Assyrian monarch, whom the Hebrews called Pul, "came against the land," and his enmity had to be bought off by the payment of a thousand talents of silver (2 Kings xv. 19). A far greater monarch, Tiglath-Pileser II., ascended the Assyrian throne about twenty years later (B.C. 745), when Isaiah may have been thirty or thirty-five, and began at once a career of conquest, which spread alarm over all the neighbouring nations. In Syria it was felt that the new enemy could only be resisted by a general confederacy of the petty monarchs who divided among them the Syro-Palestinian region; and accordingly an effort was made to unite them all under the presidency of Rezin of Damascus.[1] Ahaz, however, the king of Judah at the time, declined to make common cause with the other petty princes. Taking a narrow view of the situation, he thought that his own interests would be best promoted by the crippling of Syria and Israel, powers generally hostile to Judah, and close upon his borders. The immediate consequence of his refusal to join the league was an attempt

[1] See 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 131.

to coerce him, or to depose him and place upon his throne a prince who would adopt the Syrian policy. Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Samaria attacked him in different quarters, and inflicted on him severe defeats (2 Chron. xxviii. 5, 6). They then conjointly marched into the heart of his kingdom, and besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings xvi. 5). Under these circumstances, Ahaz placed himself under the protection of the Assyrian monarch, declared himself his "servant," and humbly besought his aid. Tiglath-Pileser readily complied, and, having marched a great army into Syria, conquered Damascus, slew Rezin, defeated Pekah, and carried a large portion of the Israelite nation into captivity (2 Kings xv. 29; xvi. 9; 1 Chron. v. 26). Ahaz personally appeared before him at Damascus, and did homage for his crown, thenceforth reigning as a vassal and tributary monarch.

The crushing blow dealt to the kingdom of Israel by Tiglath-Pileser was shortly followed by a still severer calamity. In B.C. 724, when Isaiah was about fifty-five years of age, Shalmaneser IV., Tiglath-Pileser's successor, determined to destroy the last vestige of Israelite independence, and, marching an army into the country, laid siege to Samaria. The city was one of great strength, and for three years resisted every assault. Finally, however, in B.C. 722, it fell, just about the time that Shalmaneser was dispossessed of his throne by the usurping Sargon. Sargon claims the glory of having captured the place, and of having carried off from it 27,280 prisoners.[1]

Judæa now stood stripped of independent neighbours, manifestly the next country on which the weight of the Assyrian arms would fall. The submission of Ahaz, and his subserviency to Assyria throughout his whole reign (2 Kings xvi. 10—18), had helped to defer the evil day; in addition to which Assyria had been much occupied by revolts of conquered countries and by internal dissensions. But with the accession of Hezekiah (B.C. 727) a bolder line of policy had been adopted by the Jewish state. Hezekiah "rebelled against the King of Assyria, and served him not" (2 Kings xviii. 7). In this rebellion he had probably the countenance and support of Isaiah, who always exhorted his countrymen not to be afraid of the Assyrians (ch. x. 24; xxxvii. 6). Isaiah's counsel was that no foreign alliance should be sought, but that entire dependence should be placed on Jehovah, who would protect his own people, and discomfit the Assyrians, should they venture on making an attack. Hezekiah, however, had other advisers also, men of a different stamp, politicians such as Shebna and Eliakim, to whom the simple faith of the prophet appeared fanaticism and folly. The dictates of worldly wisdom seemed to them to require that the alliance of some powerful nation should be courted, and a treaty made whereby Judæa might secure the assistance of a strong body of auxiliaries, should her independence be menaced. The political horizon presented at the time one only power of this kind—

[1] G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon.'

one only possible rival to Assyria—viz. Egypt. Egypt was, like Assyria, an organized monarchy, with a considerable population, long trained to arms, and especially strong where Judæa was most defective—that is, in horses and chariots. Behind Egypt, closely allied with her, and exercising a species of suzerainty over her, was Ethiopia, with resources from which, in case of need, Egypt might draw.[1] It is uncertain at what date the Assyrian monarch began to threaten Hezekiah with his vengeance. Sargon certainly made several expeditions into Syria, and even into Philistia, and in one place he calls himself "the conqueror of the land of Judah;" but there is no sufficient evidence of his having really made any serious attempt to reduce Judæa to subjection. Apparently it was not until after Sennacherib had ascended the Assyrian throne (in B.C. 705) that the conquest of the rebellious Jews was actually taken in hand by the great monarch. But the danger had impended during the whole of Hezekiah's reign; and, as it became more imminent, the counsels of the anti-religious party prevailed. Ambassadors were sent into Egypt (ch. xxx. 2—4), and an alliance appears to have been concluded, whereby the reigning Pharaoh, Shabatok, and his Ethiopian suzerain, Tirhakah, undertook to furnish an army for the defence of Judæa, if it were attacked by the Assyrians.[2] In the fifth year of Sennacherib (B.C. 701) the attack came. Sennacherib in person conducted his army into Palestine, spread his troops over the whole country, took all the smaller fortified towns—forty-six in number, according to his own account[3]—and, concentrating his forces about Jerusalem, formally laid siege to the city (ch. xxii. 1—14). Hezekiah endured the siege for a time, but, despairing of being able to resist for long, and receiving no aid from Egypt, felt himself after a while forced to come to terms, and buy off his adversary. On the receipt of a large sum in gold and silver, derived chiefly from the temple treasures (2 Kings xviii. 14—16), Sennacherib retired, Hezekiah submitting himself, and professedly resuming the position of a tributary.

But this position of things satisfied neither party. Sennacherib distrusted Hezekiah, and Hezekiah no sooner saw the Assyrian hosts retire than he resumed his intrigues with Egypt. After a very brief interval—to be counted, perhaps, by months—war once more broke out. Sennacherib with his main forces occupied the Shefeleh and Philistia, keeping watch on Egypt; while at the same time he sent a detachment under a general to threaten, and, should opportunity offer, seize Jerusalem. Of the proceedings of this detachment Isaiah gives a detailed account (ch. xxxvi. 2—22; xxxvii. 8). He was himself present in Jerusalem, and encouraged Hezekiah to defy his foes (ch. xxxvii. 1—7). Hezekiah acted on his advice; and Sennacherib was provoked to write a letter containing still more violent threats against the holy city. This Hezekiah "spread before the Lord" (ch. xxxvii.

[1] Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. pp. 433—458.

[2] This is not distinctly stated, but seems to be implied in ch. xxx. 2, 7; xxxi. 1; xxxvi. 6, 9; xxxvii. 9.

[3] G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon.'

14); and then the fiat went forth for the destruction of his host. The place of the slaughter is uncertain; but there can be no manner of doubt that a tremendous disaster befell his army, producing complete panic and a hasty retreat. Nor were the consequences merely temporary. "Like Xerxes in Greece, Sennacherib never recovered from the shock of the disaster in Judah. He made no more expeditions against either Southern Palestine or Egypt."[1]

Judæa was now for a considerable space of time completely relieved from all threat of attack or invasion. The closing years of Hezekiah's life were peaceful and prosperous (2 Chron. xxxii. 23, 27—29). Manasseh, during his early reign, was untroubled by any foreign foe, and was too young to introduce innovations in religion. If Isaiah's sun set ultimately in blood-red clouds, he must still have enjoyed an interval of peace and rest between the final withdrawal of the Assyrians and the commencement of Manasseh's persecution. The interval may have sufficed for the composition of the "Book of Consolation."

§ 3. On the Character and Contents of the Book ascribed to Isaiah, as it has come down to us.

The Book of Isaiah, as it has come down to us, presents a certain composite character. To the critical and the uncritical it is equally apparent that it divides itself into three main parts, each with characteristics of its own. The first thirty-five chapters are wholly, or almost wholly, prophetic —that is to say, they are didactic, admonitory, hortatory, containing next to no narrative—a declaration to the Israelites of the "word of the Lord," or of the will of God with respect to them. These thirty-five prophetical chapters are followed by four historical ones (ch. xxxvi.—xxxix.), which contain a plain and simple narrative of certain events in the reign of Hezekiah. The work concludes with a third part, which is, like the first, prophetical, and which extends to twenty-seven chapters (from ch. xl. to ch. lxvi.).

There is a marked contrast of subject-matter, and of certain features in the composition, between Part I. and Part III. The *main* enemy of Israel in Part I. is Assyria; in Part III., Babylon. Part I. deals with the times of Hezekiah and Isaiah; Part III., with the time of the Babylonian captivity. Part I. contains numerous headings and dates, which very palpably divide it into portions (ch. i. 1; ii. 1; vi. 1; vii. 1; xiii. 1; xiv. 28; xv. 1; xvii. 1, etc.); Part III. has no such subdivisions, but seems to flow on continuously. Part I. is chiefly denunciatory; Part III. chiefly consolatory. Part I. embraces all the known world; Part III. touches only Babylon, Persia, and Palestine. Both parts are Messianic; but Part I. presents Messiah as a mighty King and Ruler; Part III. reveals him as a suffering Victim, a meek and lowly Redeemer.

[1] Professor Sayce, 'Ancient Empires of the East,' p. 380

Further, when Parts I. and III. are carefully examined, they are found to resemble compilations rather than continuous and connected compositions. Part I. manifestly divides itself into a number of sections, each of which is complete in itself, and but slightly connected with what precedes or follows. Part III. has less appearance of discontinuity, but really contains so many and such abrupt transitions, that it is almost impossible to regard it as a continuous whole. The entire book thus presents the characteristics of a collection or compilation—an artificial gathering into one of prophecies, uttered at various times and on various occasions, each of which was complete in itself, and originally intended to stand by itself, without proem or sequel.

The general arrangement of the book, by whomsoever it was compiled, which will be considered later,[1] seems to be chronological. All the notes of time contained in Part I. are in their proper order,[2] and all are anterior to the period considered in Part II., which again belongs probably to an earlier date than the composition of Part III. It is not clear, however, that chronological order has always been observed in the arrangement of the sections whereof Parts I. and III. are composed. The prophecies were apparently delivered orally at the first, and reduced to writing subsequently, sometimes at a considerable interval. In their earliest written form they were thus a number of separate documents. From time to time collections seem to have been made, and in some of these an order other than the chronological may have been followed. For instance, in the "Book of Burdens," extending from ch. xiii. to ch. xxiii., the opening burden, that of Babylon, is not likely to have been composed nearly so early as several of the others; and the fifth burden, that of Egypt, contains indications of still later authorship. The compiler would seem to have thrown together prophecies that were similar in character, whatever might have been the date of their composition.

To enter a little more into detail, Part I. seems to contain eleven sections—

Section I., which is ch. i. in the Hebrew text, is a sort of general introduction, reproachful and minatory.

Section II., which forms ch. ii.—v., opens with an announcement of Christ's kingdom, and then contains a series of denunciations of the various sins of God's people.

Section III., which corresponds to ch. vi., records a vision vouchsafed to Isaiah, and a special mission given to him.

Section IV., which extends from ch. vii. 1 to ch. x. 4, contains a series of prophecies, largely Messianic, delivered in connection with the Syro-Israelite war.

Section V., which begins with ch. x. 5 and extends to the close of ch. xxiii., has been called the "Book of Burdens," and consists of a series of denunciations of woe upon different nations, chiefly upon the enemies of Israel.

[1] See below, § 6.

[2] *E.g.* ch. vi. 1 (B.C. 759); ch. vii. 1 (B.C. 734—730); ch. xiv. 28 (B.C. 727); ch. xx. 1 (B.C. 711).

Section VI., which comprises ch. xxiv.—xxvii., consists of denunciations of woe upon the world at large, relieved by promises of the salvation of a remnant.

Section VII., which extends from ch. xxviii. to ch. xxxi., consists of renewed denunciations of woe upon Israel and Judah.

Section VIII., which is limited to the first eight verses of ch. xxxii., is a prophecy of Messiah's kingdom.

Section IX., which forms the remainder of ch. xxxii., is a renewal of denunciations of woe upon Israel, joined with promises.

Section X., which coincides with ch. xxxiii., is a prophecy of judgment on Assyria.

Section XI., which comprises ch. xxxiv. and xxxv., declares the Divine judgment upon the world, and the glory of the Church consequent upon it.

Part II. consists of two sections—

Section I. is formed of ch. xxxvi. and xxxvii., and contains an account of the threatening embassy of Rabshakeh, the letter of Sennacherib to Hezekiah, and the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army. (It corresponds closely with ch. xviii. and xix. of 2 Kings.)

Section II. is formed of ch. xxxviii. and xxxix. It contains an account of Hezekiah's illness and recovery, of the embassy of Merodach-Baladan, and of Isaiah's prediction of the ultimate conquest of Judæa by Babylon. (It corresponds with ch. xx. of 2 Kings.)

Part III. appears at first sight to be divided into three equal sections, each composed of nine chapters—(1) ch. xl.—xlviii.; (2) ch. xlix.—lviii.; (3) ch. lviii.—lxvi.; the same refrain ("There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked") terminating both the first and the second portions; and it is almost certain that whoever made the present arrangement into chapters must have intended this division. But such a division of Part III. would be one according to form, and not according to substance. Considered in respect of its subject-matter, the "Part" divides, like Part I., not into three, but into a much larger number of sections. No doubt different arrangements might be made; but the following seems to us the most free from objection:—

Section I. coincides with ch. xl., and is an address of consolation to the people of God in some deep affliction—presumably the Babylonian captivity.

Section II. extends from ch. xli. to ch. xlviii., and is a prophecy of the recovery of the people of God from their sin, and from their bondage in Babylon.

Section III. extends from ch. xlix. to ch. liii., and is an account of the mission of a great Deliverer who is called the "Servant of Jehovah."

Section IV. extends from ch. liv. to ch. lvi. 8, and consists of promises to Israel, combined with exhortations.

Section V. begins with ver. 9 of ch. lvi., and extends to the close of ch. lvii. It is an address of warning to the wicked.

Section VI. consists of ch. lviii. and lix., and contains practical instructions and warnings, followed by a confession and a promise.

Section VII. coincides with ch. lx., and consists of a description of the glories of the restored Jerusalem.

Section VIII. comprises ch. lxi. and lxii., and is a soliloquy of the "Servant of Jehovah," who promises peace and prosperity to the restored Jerusalem.

Section IX. contains the first six verses only of ch. lxiii., and gives a picture of God's judgment upon his enemies.

Section X. extends from ver. 7 of ch. lxiii. to the close of ch. lxiv., and is an address of the Jewish Church in Babylonia to God, including thanksgiving, confession of sin, and prayer.

Section XI. coincides with ch. lxv., and contains God's answer to his exiled Church's prayer.

Section XII. coincides with ch. lxvi., and consists of very solemn final threatenings and promises.

§ 4. On the Style and Diction of the "Book of Isaiah."

It is generally allowed that Isaiah, as a writer, transcends all the other Hebrew prophets. "In Isaiah," says Ewald, "we see prophetic authorship reaching its culminating point. Everything conspired to raise him to an elevation to which no prophet, either before or after, could as writer attain. Among the other prophets, each of the more important ones is distinguished by some one particular excellence, and some one peculiar talent; in Isaiah, all kinds of talent and all beauties of prophetic discourse meet together, so as mutually to temper and qualify each other; it is not so much any single feature that distinguishes him, as the symmetry and perfection of the whole."[1]

A lofty and majestic calmness, a grandeur and dignity of expression, is perhaps his first, most patent characteristic. However strong the feelings that move him, however exciting the circumstances under which he writes, he always succeeds in maintaining a perfect self-control, and a command over his language which prevents it from ever becoming extravagant or inappropriate. While the strain rises and falls in accordance with the variety of the subject-matter, and the language at times becomes highly poetic, figurative, and out of the common, there seems always to preside over the composition a calm spirit of self-restraint, which checks hyperbole, bridles passion, and renders the progress and development of the discourse majestic, and, in a certain sense, equable. As Ewald observes, "we note in him an overflowing, swelling fulness of thought, which might readily lose itself in the vast and indefinite, but which always at the right time, with tight rein, collects and tempers its exuberance, to the bottom exhausting the thought and completing the utterance, and yet never too diffuse. This severe self-control is the most admirably seen in those shorter utterances, which, by briefly sketched images and thoughts, give us the vague apprehension of something infinite, while nevertheless they stand before us complete in themselves and clearly delineated."

Next to this lofty and majestic calmness, the energy and liveliness of Isaiah's style seem to demand notice. This energy and liveliness are produced, primarily, by the profuse employment of striking images; secondly, by dramatic representation; thirdly, by the large employment of pointed

[1] 'Propheten des Alten Bundes,' p. 166.

antithesis; fourthly, by frequent play upon words; fifthly, by the strength of the expressions used; sixthly, by vivid descriptions; and seventhly, by the amplification and elaboration of occasional points.

1. The profuse employment of striking images must be evident to every reader. Not a paragraph, scarcely a verse, is without some simile or metaphor, which gives a poetical turn to the form of expression, and elevates the language above that of ordinary life. And the variety and force of the metaphors are most remarkable. Assyria is a swarm of bees (ch. vii. 18), a raging stream (ch. viii. 7, 8), a razor (ch. vii. 20), a lion (ch. v. 29), a rod (ch. x. 5), an axe (ch. x. 15), etc. Jehovah is a potter (ch. xxix. 16; xlv. 9, etc.), a shepherd (ch. xl. 11), a man of war (ch. xlii. 15), a stone of stumbling and rock of offence (ch. viii. 14), a gin and a snare (ch. viii. 14), a purger of metals (ch. i. 25), a lion (ch. xxxi. 4), birds flying (ch. xxxi. 5), a strong fortress guarded by moats and streams (ch. xxxiii. 21), a rock (ch. xvii. 10), a shadow (ch. xxv. 4), a crown of glory (ch. xxviii. 5). Zion is a cottage in a vineyard (ch. i. 8), a lodge in a garden of cucumbers (ch. i. 8), the mountain of the Lord (ch. ii. 3), a captive sitting in the dust (ch. lii. 2), a woman in travail (ch. lxvi. 8). Israel generally is a diseased body (ch. i. 5, 6), an oak whose leaf fadeth (ch. i. 30), an unproductive vineyard (ch. v. 7), a bulging wall that is about to burst (ch. xxx. 13). Messiah is "a root of Jesse" (ch. xi. 10), "a rod" (ch. xi. 1), "a branch" (ch. xi. 1), "a tender plant" (ch. liii. 2), "a servant" (ch. xlii. 1), "a man of sorrows" (ch. liii. 3), "a lamb brought to the slaughter" (ch. liii. 7), "a sheep dumb before her shearers" (ch. liii. 7). The degenerate are described as those "whose silver has become dross, whose wine is mixed with water" (ch. i. 22); the persistently wicked as those who "draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope" (ch. v. 18). Boasters "conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble" (ch. xxxiii. 11); nations are in God's sight "as a drop from a bucket, and as small dust upon a balance" (ch. xl. 15); humanity in general is as "grass that withereth," and as "the flower that fadeth." Among specially beautiful metaphors may be cited: "His heart was moved, and the heart of his people, *as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind*" (ch. vii. 2); "The people which *walked in darkness have seen a great light:* they that dwell in *the land of the shadow of death*, upon them hath *the light shined*" (ch. ix. 2); "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, *as the waters cover the sea*" (ch. xi. 9); "With joy shall ye *draw water out of the wells of salvation*" (ch. xii. 3); "A man shall be . . . *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*" (ch. xxxii. 2). To do full justice, however, to this branch of the subject, we should have to quote from every chapter, almost from every paragraph, since the beauty of which we are speaking pervades the entire composition, even entering into the historical chapters (ch. xxxvii. 3, 22, 25, 27, 29; xxxviii. 12, 14, 18, etc.), where it was scarcely to be expected.

2. Dramatic representation is, comparatively speaking, infrequent, but still occurs sufficiently often to be characteristic, and to have an appreciable

effect upon the liveliness of the composition. The most remarkable instance of it is the dialogue at the beginning of ch. lxiii.—

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?"
I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."
Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?"
"I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was no man with me," etc.

But there are also numerous other passages, where, for a verse or two at a time, words are put into the mouth of speakers other than the author, with a lively and stirring effect (see ch. iii. 6, 7; iv. 1; v. 19; vii. 12; viii. 19; ix. 10; x. 8—11, 13, 14; xiv. 10, 13, 14, 16, 17; xix. 11; xxi. 8, 11, 12; xxii. 13; xxviii. 15; xxix. 11, 12, 15; xxx. 10, 11, 16; xl. 3, 6, 27; xli. 6; xlii. 17; xliv. 16—20; xlv. 9, 10, 14; xlvii. 7, 10; xlix. 14, 20, 21; lii. 7; lvi. 3, 12; lviii. 3; lxv. 5; lxvi. 5).

3. Antithesis is, no doubt, a characteristic of Hebrew poetry generally, but in the other sacred writers it is often rather verbal than real, while in Isaiah it is almost always true, pointed, and telling. The following may suffice as instances: "Though your sins be *as scarlet*, they shall be *as white as snow*; though they be *red like crimson*, they shall be *as wool*" (ch. i. 18); "It shall come to pass, that instead of *sweet smell* [spice] there shall be *rottenness*; and instead of *a girdle, a rope*; and instead of *well-set hair, baldness*; and instead of *a stomacher, a girdle of sackcloth*; *burning* instead of *beauty*" (ch. iii. 24); "He looked for *judgment*, but behold *oppression*; for *righteousness*, but behold *a cry*" (ch. v. 7); "*Ten acres* of vineyard shall yield *one bath*, and *the seed of an homer* [or, 'a homer of seed'] shall yield *an ephah*" (ch. v. 10); "Woe unto them that call *evil good*, and *good evil*; that put *darkness* for *light*, and *light* for *darkness*; that put *bitter* for *sweet*, and *sweet* for *bitter*" (ch. v. 20); "Behold, *my servants shall eat*, but *ye shall be hungry*: behold, *my servants shall drink*, but *ye shall be thirsty*: behold, *my servants shall rejoice*, but *ye shall be ashamed*: behold, *my servants shall sing for joy of heart*, but *ye shall cry for sorrow of heart*, and shall *howl for vexation of spirit*" (ch. lxv. 13, 14).

4. "Play upon words" is also a common feature in Hebrew literature; but only a few of the sacred writers use it so frequently, or give it such prominence, as Isaiah. Knobel gives, as instances,[1] ch. i. 23; v. 7; vii. 9; xvii. 1, 2; xxii. 5, 6; xxviii. 10, *et seqq.*; xxix. 1, 2, 9; xxx. 16; xxxii. 7, 17, 19; to which may be added ch. xxxiv. 14; lxii. 4; and lxv. 10. As, however, this ornament, depending generally upon the assonance of the Hebrew words, is necessarily lost in translation, and can only be appreciated by a Hebrew scholar, we do not propose further to dwell upon it.

5. The "strength" of Isaiah's expressions will be recognized by all who

[1] 'Exegetisches Handbuch,' vol. vi. p. 21.

have studied his work, and may be seen to a certain extent even through the veil of a translation. Such phrases as the following arrest attention, and lodge themselves in the memory, from their intensity and inherent force: "There is no soundness in it; but *wounds*, and *bruises*, and *putrefying sores*" (ch. i. 6); "How is the faithful city become *an harlot!*" (ch. i. 21); "Enter into the rock, and *hide thee in the dust*" (ch. ii. 10); "What mean ye that ye *beat my people to pieces*, and *grind the faces of the poor?*" (ch. iii. 15); "*Hell* hath enlarged her desire, and *opened her mouth without measure*" (ch. v. 14); "Their horses' hoofs shall be *counted like flint*, and their *wheels like a whirlwind*" (ch. v. 28); "The two *tails of these smoking firebrands*" (ch. vii. 4); "His name shall be called *Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*" (ch. ix. 6); "He shall *smite the earth with the rod of his mouth*, and *with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*" (ch. xi. 4); "The earth shall *reel to and fro like a drunkard*" (ch. xxiv. 20); "God will *swallow up death in victory*" (ch. xxv. 8); "The Lord with his *sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing* [swift] *serpent*" (ch. xxvii. 1); "The people shall be as *the burnings of lime*" (ch. xxxiii. 12); "They that wait upon the Lord shall *renew their strength*; they shall *mount up with wings as eagles*" (ch. xl. 31); "A *bruised reed shall he not break*, and *smoking flax shall he not quench*" (ch. xlii. 3); "I clothe the heavens with *blackness*, and I *make sackcloth their covering*" (ch. l. 3); "His visage was *so marred* more than any man" (ch. lii. 14); "The wicked are like *the troubled sea*, when it *cannot rest*, whose *waters cast up mire and dirt*" (ch. lvii. 20); "The Lord *will come with fire*, and *with his chariots like a whirlwind*, to *render his anger with fury* and *his rebuke with flames of fire*" (ch. lxvi. 15); "*Their worm shall not die*, neither shall *their fire be quenched*; and they shall be *an abhorring unto all flesh*" (ch. lxvi. 24).

6. The power of vivid description is remarkably shown: (1) In the pictures of desolation which are so frequent, especially in those of ch. xiii., xiv., and xxxiv. "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees, excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls [or, 'ostriches'] shall dwell there, and satyrs (?) shall dance there. And jackals shall cry in their castles, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged" (ch. xiii. 19—22). "I will make it [equivalent to 'Babylon'] a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the bosom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts" (ch. xiv. 23). "The pelican and the bittern shall possess it [equivalent to 'Edom']; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and one shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the plummet of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there,

and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, a court for owls [or, 'ostriches']. And the wild beasts of the desert shall meet with the wild beasts of the island [equivalent to 'jackals'], and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the night-monster also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the arrow-snake make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there, verily, shall the vultures assemble, every one with her mate" (ch. xxxiv. 11—15). (2) In the idyllic passages, ch. xi. 6—9; xxxv. 1—10; xl. 11; and lxv. 25, of which we will quote one only: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (3) In the account of woman's finery (ch. iii. 16—24). (4) In the imitative description of rushing water, in ch. xvii.: "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters" (ch. xvii. 12, 13). (5) In the graphic portraiture of an army marching on Jerusalem: "He is come to Aiath, he is passed through Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his baggage: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Rama is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: Hearken, O Laisha! O thou poor Anathoth! Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. That very day shall he halt at Nob; he shall shake his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem" (ch. x. 28—32).

7. The seventh and last point, giving energy and force to Isaiah's style, is the effective use of rhetorical amplification. By a repetition of the same idea in different words, which is sometimes twofold, sometimes threefold, often fourfold, occasionally as much as fivefold, a deep impression is produced—an impression at once of the earnestness of the writer and of the vast importance of the points on which he insists with so much reiteration. "Ah sinful nation," he says, "a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (ch. i. 4). And again, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (ch. xxv. 4). And, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the

hills in a balance?" (ch. xl. 12). And, "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" (ch. xl. 14). And, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (ch. liii. 4, 5). Another form of rhetorical amplification may be noted in ch. ii. 13—16; iii. 2, 3, 18—23; v. 12; xxii. 12, 13; xli. 19; xlvii. 13, etc.

A further characteristic of Isaiah's style is its wonderful variety. Sometimes smooth and gently flowing (ch. xi. 6—9; xxxv. 5—10; lv. 10—13), at other times abrupt and harsh (ch. xxi. 11, 12; lvi. 9—12), now and then simple and prosaic (ch. vii. 1—3; viii. 1—4), anon soaring into the highest flights of poetic imagery (ch. ix. 2—7; xi. 1—9; xiv. 4—23, etc.), it includes every kind of artificial ornament known at the time—parable (ch. v. 1—7), vision (ch. vi. 1—13), symbolic action (ch. xx. 2), dramatic dialogue (ch. xxi. 8, 9; xxix. 11, 12; xl. 6—8; lxiii. 1—6), lyric bursts of song (ch. xii. 1—6; xxvi. 1—18), refrains (ch. ii. 11, 17; v. 25; ix. 12, 17, 20; x. 4; xlviii. 22; lvii. 21, etc.), assonance (ch. v. 7; vii. 9, etc.); and uses all, as occasion arises, with equal point and appositeness. Isaiah's style has thus no single peculiar colouring. As Ewald remarks, "He is neither the specially logical, nor the specially elegiacal, nor the specially oratorical, nor the specially admonitory prophet, as perhaps Joel, or Hosea, or Micah, in whom a particular colouring more predominates. Isaiah is capable of adapting his style to the most different subjects, and in this consists his greatness and his most distinguished excellence."[1]

The diction of the book is that of the purest and best times of Hebrew literature. It is remarkably free from archaisms. A certain number of "Aramaisms" or "Chaldaisms" have been pointed out,[2] more especially in the later prophecies; but these are not sufficiently numerous to disturb the general conclusion (which is that of Dr. S. Davidson[3] and of Mr. Cheyne,[4] as well as of other critics) that the vocabulary, on the whole, may be pronounced "pure and free from Chaldaisms." The number of words not occurring elsewhere in the Bible (ἅπαξ λεγόμενα) is large, and the vocabulary is ampler than perhaps that of any other book of Scripture.

[1] 'Propheten des Alten Bundes,' p. 173.

[2] See Mr. Cheyne's 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 243; Knobel, 'Exegetisches Handbuch,' vol. v. p. 297.

[3] 'Introduction to the Old Testament,' vol. ii. p. 54.

[4] 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 244.

§ 5. On Certain Modern Theories as to the Authorship of the Existing "Book."

A theory was started, towards the close of the eighteenth century, by a German writer named Koppe, in his translation of Bishop Lowth's 'Isaiah,' to the effect that Isaiah was not the real author of the prophecies contained in ch. xl.—lxvi. of the work ascribed to him. The work of an entirely different prophet, living towards the close of the Captivity, had, he conjectured, been attached by some accident to the genuine prophecies of the son of Amoz, and had thenceforth passed by his name. The theory thus started was welcomed by other Germans of the rationalistic school, and could shortly boast among its supporters the names of Döderlin, Eichhorn, Paulus, Bauer, Rosenmüller, De Wette, Justi, and the great Hebraist Gesenius. It based itself mainly on two grounds: (1) that the author of ch. xl.—lxvi. takes for his standpoint the time of the Babylonian captivity, and, speaking as if that were present, from thence looks forward into the subsequent future; (2) that he has a knowledge of the name and career of Cyrus, which a prophet living two centuries before could not possibly have had. The theory was subsequently further supported by alleged differences between the style and diction of ch. i.—xxxix. and ch. xl.—lxvi., which were declared to necessitate different authors, and to mark ch. xl.—lxvi. as the production of a later age.

The simple theory thus started of two Isaiahs, an earlier and a later, one contemporary with Hezekiah, the other with the later Captivity, whose works had been accidentally thrown together, has, since its original promulgation, been elaborated and expanded, chiefly by the labours of Ewald, in a wonderful way. Ewald traces in the Book of Isaiah, as it has come down to us, the work of at least seven hands.[1] To Isaiah, the contemporary of Hezekiah, the son of Amoz, he ascribes thirty chapters only out of the sixty-six, together with parts of two others. To a second great prophet, whom he calls "the Great Unnamed," and whom he places towards the close of the Captivity, he assigns eighteen chapters, with parts of four others. A third prophet, who lived in the reign of Manasseh, wrote one whole chapter (the priceless fifty-third) and portions of four or five others. A fourth, belonging to the time of Ezekiel, wrote almost the whole of four chapters. Another, perhaps Jeremiah, wrote two chapters; and two others wrote portions of chapters—one of them the prophecy in ch. xxi. 1—10; and the other that beginning ch. xiii. 2 and terminating ch. xiv. 23. The Book of Isaiah, as it has come down to us, is thus a patchwork of an extraordinary kind. Ewald's theory may be thus exhibited in a tabular form—

[1] Ewald's views are propounded, partly in his 'Propheten des Alten Bundes,' but more completely in his 'History of Israel,' vol. iv. p. 207, *et seqq.*; and vol. v. pp. 15, 41—47.

	AUTHOR.	DATE.
Ch. i.—xii.	Isaiah himself	B.C. 759—713
Ch. xiii.—xiv. 23 ...	Unknown author (No. 1) ...	„ 570—560
Ch. xiv. 24—xx. ...	Isaiah himself	„ 727—710
Ch. xxi. 1—10	Unknown author (No. 2) ...	„ 570—560
Ch. xxi. 11—xxxiii. ...	Isaiah himself	„ 715—700
Ch. xxxiv. and xxxv. ...	Jeremiah (?)	„ 540—538
Ch. xxxvi.—xxxix. ...	Not assigned.	
Ch. xl.—lii. 12	The Great Unnamed ...	„ 550—540
Ch. lii. 13—liv. 12 ...	Unknown author (No. 3) ...	„ 690—640
Ch. liv. 13—lvi. 8 ...	The Great Unnamed ...	„ 550—540
Ch. lvi. 9—lvii. 11 ...	Unknown author (No. 3) ...	„ 690—640
Ch. lvii. 12—21... ...	The Great Unnamed ...	„ 550—540
Ch. lviii. 1—lix. 20 ...	Unknown author (No. 4) ...	„ 595—575
Ch. lix. 21—lxii. ...	The Great Unnamed ...	„ 550—540
Ch. lxiii. and lxiv. ...	Unknown author (No. 4) ...	„ 595—575
Ch. lxv. and lxvi. ...	The Great Unnamed ...	„ 550—540

Nor does it at all appear that with Ewald's theory of a sevenfold authorship of "Isaiah" we have reached the final outcome of the separatist hypothesis started by Koppe. The latest English writer[1] is of opinion that "Ewald's treatment of the latter part of the Book of Isaiah cannot," at any rate, "be complained of on the score of excessive analysis." He declares that "it is becoming more and more certain (?) that the present form of the prophetic Scriptures is due to a literary class (the so-called Sopherim, 'scribes,' or 'Scripturists'), whose principal function was collecting *and supplementing* the scattered records of prophetic revelation. This function they performed with rare self-abnegation. Of a regard on their part for personal distinction there is not a trace; self-consciousness is swallowed up in the sense of belonging, if only in a secondary degree, to the company of inspired men. *They wrote, they recast, they edited*, in the same spirit in which a gifted artist of our own day devoted himself to the glory of modern painters." The result is that the Book of Isaiah, as it has come down to us, is a "mosaic," or patchwork, the production of no one knows how many authors, brought gradually into its present condition.

Nothing is more certain than that these theories did not originate in any marked differences of style between the portions of the Book of Isaiah which are assigned to different authors. They arose entirely from the subject-matter of the prophecies. "The really decisive arguments against the unity of authorship are derived," we are told, "(1) from the historical circumstances implied in the disputed chapters, and (2) from the originality of the ideas, or of the forms in which the ideas are expressed."[2] Under

[1] See Mr. Cheyne's 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii., Essay vi. pp. 215—217.

[2] Cheyne, 'The Book of Isaiah chronologically arranged,' p. xxi.

the former head, the sole ground urged is the standpoint occupied by the writer of the later chapters, which is that of an exile in Babylon, writing when Jerusalem and the temple have long lain in ruins, and the Jews are becoming dispirited at the apparent refusal of God to interpose in their behalf; under the latter come the sarcastic descriptions of idolatry, the appeals to the victories of Cyrus, the references to the influence of the angelic powers (ch. xxiv. 21), the resurrection of the body (ch. xxvi. 19), the everlasting punishment of the wicked (ch. l. 11; lxvi. 24), and the idea of vicarious atonement (ch. liii.).[1] It was only after Isaiah had been split up into fragments upon the ground of the contents of the different portions, that the argument from differences in the style of different parts occurred to the critics, and was brought forward as subsidiary. Even now no great stress is laid upon it. It is admitted that questions concerning style are very much matters of taste, and that no unanimity can be expected on them.[2] It is allowed that "the Great Unnamed," if a different writer from Isaiah, often imitated his style, and knew his prophecies by heart.[3] It is not even pretended that seven styles can be made out, corresponding to the seven Isaianic authors of Ewald's list. The most that has been attempted is to prove two styles—an earlier and a later; but even here the success of the efforts made is not great. In Germany the unity of the style has been maintained, in spite of them, by Jahn, Hengstenberg, Kleinert, Hävernick, Stier, Keil, Delitzsch, and F. Windischmann; in England, by Henderson, Huxtable, Kay, Urwick, Dean Payne Smith, Professor Birks, and Professor Stanley Leathes. A recent advocate of the separatist theory seems almost to concede the point, when he sets himself to argue that unity of style does not necessarily imply unity of authorship, and so that "Isaiah" may be a work by several hands, even though the style be uniform.[4]

§ 6. A Defence of the Unity of the Book.

The question whether "Isaiah" be the work of one writer or more, is to be regarded rather as one of literary interest than of theological importance. Nobody doubts but that the "book" existed *in the form in which we have it* during the time of our Lord and his apostles; and it is thus *our present book* which has their sanction as a portion of the inspired Word of God. This it is equally, whether it is the work of one prophet, or of seven, or of seventy. The controversy may therefore be conducted without heat or asperity, being one as purely literary as that of the unity of the 'Odyssey' or the 'Iliad.'

[1] Cheyne, 'The Book of Isaiah chronologically arranged,' p. xxiii. It is noticeable that, in two cases, these "late ideas" are contained in passages which Ewald assigns to Isaiah himself.

[2] Cheyne, 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 218. Compare Moody-Stuart, 'The Bible True to Itself,' p. 416, who quotes Professor Robertson Smith and Bleek to the same effect.

[3] Cheyne, 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 232. [4] Ibid., p. 219.

The arguments in favour of the unity may be divided into the external and the internal. Of external arguments, the first and most important is that of the versions, especially the Septuagint, which is a distinct evidence that, as early as about B.C. 250, the entire contents of the "book" were ascribed to Isaiah the son of Amoz. It is said that the Psalms were similarly ascribed to David, though many were not of his composition; but this is not the fact. The Septuagint translators headed the Book of Psalms with the simple word "Psalms;" and in their headings to particular psalms assigned several to authors other than David, as Moses, Jeremiah, Asaph, Ethan, Haggai, and Zechariah.

The next external testimony is that of Jesus the son of Sirach, the author of the Book of Ecclesiasticus. The writer is supposed to have lived about B.C. 180. He distinctly ascribes to the Isaiah who was contemporary with Hezekiah the portion of the work (ch. xl.—lxvi.) which the separatists of all shades assign to an author, or authors, of a later date (Ecclus. xlviii. 18—24). Now the prologue to the son of Sirach's work declares him to have been "a man of great diligence and wisdom among the Hebrews," and "no less famous for great learning," so that he may be assumed to deliver the judgment of the most learned among the Jews of his time.

Isaiah's authorship of the later (disputed) chapters was further, most clearly, accepted by the writers of the New Testament and their contemporaries—by St. Matthew (iii. 3, etc.); St. Mark (i. 2, Revised Version), St. Luke (iii. 4—6); St. John (xii. 38); St. Paul (Rom. x. 16—21, etc.); St. John the Baptist (John i. 28); the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts viii. 28—34); the elders of Nazareth (Luke iv. 16—20); Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' xi. 1), etc. If the greater part of these were unlearned and uncritical men, yet St. Paul, at any rate, who was "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts xxii. 3), had been fully instructed in the Scriptures, and "must have known," as Mr. Urwick says, "if the learned Jews of his day recognized two Isaiahs, or the absorption of the prophecies of a very great yet unnamed exile into those of the first Isaiah."[1] Josephus was also a man of considerable reading and research; yet he unhesitatingly ascribes to Isaiah the composition of the prophecies respecting Cyrus (ch. xliv. 28, etc.). It may be confidently laid down that there was no Jewish tradition which taught that the "Book of Isaiah" was a composite work—a congeries of prophecies of various dates, and from the hands of various authors.

Aben Ezra, who wrote in the twelfth century after our era, was the first critic who ventured on the suggestion that the prophecies of ch. xl.—lxvi. might not be the actual work of Isaiah. Previously to his time, and again from his date until the close of the eighteenth century, not a breath of suspicion was uttered, not a whisper on the subject was heard. The Book of Psalms was known to be composite; the Book of Proverbs bore on its face that it consisted of four collections (Prov. i. 1; xxv. 1; xxx. 1; xxxi. 1); but Isaiah was universally accepted as the continuous work of one and the same author.

[1] 'The Servant of Jehovah,' p. 2.

The internal evidence of unity divides itself under five heads: 1. Identity in respect of the greatness, and the quality, of the genius exhibited by the writer. 2. Similarity in the language and constructions. 3. Similarity in the thoughts, images, and other rhetorical ornaments. 4. Similarity in little characteristic expressions. 5. Correspondences, partly in the way of repetition, partly in that of completion, in the later chapters, of thoughts left incomplete in the earlier.

1. It is universally allowed by critics that the genius exhibited in the writings acknowledged as Isaiah's is extraordinary, transcendent, such as in the entire history of the world has been possessed by few. The genius is also admitted to be of a peculiar quality, characterized by sublimity, profusion and novelty of thought, breadth and variety of power, and a self-control which keeps the utterances free from any approach to bombast or extravagance. We maintain that not only is the genius exhibited in the disputed chapters equal to that shown in the undisputed, but that it is a genius *of exactly the same kind*. The sublimity of ch. lii. and liii. is allowed on all hands, as also is that of ch. xl.; xliii. 1—4, and lxiii. 1—6. Ewald says of two of these passages, "The strain here attains to such a pure, luminous sublimity, and carries the hearer away with such a wonderful charm of diction, that a person might be ready to fancy he was listening to another prophet altogether."[1] The great variety of power is similarly attested. "In no prophet," observes Ewald again, "does the mood in the composition of particular passages so much vary, as throughout the three several sections into which this part of the book (ch. xl.—lxvi.) is divided, while under vehement excitement the prophet pursues the most diverse objects. . . . The complexion of the style, although hardly anywhere passing into the representation of visions properly so called, varies in a constant interchange; and rightly to recognize these changes is the great problem for the interpretation."[2] The profusion of thought cannot possibly be questioned; and the self-control is certainly as noticeable in the disputed chapters as in the undisputed.

2. The similarity in the language and constructions has been abundantly proved by Delitzsch[3] and Urwick.[4] It is true that it has been also denied, strenuously by Knobel;[5] more faintly by others. To examine the point thoroughly would require an elaborate treatise, and would involve the copious use of Hebrew type, and the employment of arguments only appreciable by the advanced Hebrew scholar. We must therefore content ourselves, under this head, with alleging the authorities of Delitzsch, Dr. Kay, Professor Stanley Leathes, Professor Birks, Dean Payne Smith, Mr. Urwick, and Dr. S. Davidson, himself a separatist, who agrees that there is a general unity in the phraseology throughout the prophecies, or, at any

[1] 'Propheten des Alten Bundes,' vol. ii. p. 407. [2] Ibid., pp. 408, 409.
[3] 'Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. pp. 128—518.
[4] 'The Servant of Jehovah,' pp. 36—47.
[5] 'Exegetisches Handbuch,' vol. vi. pp. 296—298.

rate, that "there is not enough evidence in the style and diction to show the later origin"[1] of the disputed chapters.

3. The similarity in the thoughts, images, and other rhetorical ornaments is another large subject, which it is almost impossible, within the limits of such an Introduction as the present, to treat adequately. Isaiah's predominant thought with respect to God is of his holiness—his spotless, perfect purity, before which nothing "unclean" can stand. Hence the favourite title of God, "the Holy One of Israel," used eleven times in undisputed and thirteen times in disputed chapters, and only five times in the rest of the Old Testament. Hence his words (in Part I.), when he sees God, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (ch. vi. 5); and his description of God (in Part III.) as "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, *whose name is Holy*" (ch. lvii. 15). Next to God's holiness, he loves to magnify his power. Hence he is "the *Mighty* One of Israel" (ch. i. 24; xlix. 26; lx. 16), and has his power magnificently described in such passages as ch. ii. 10, 21; xl. 12—17, etc. The high and holy One has entered into covenant with Israel—they are his "people," his "children," his "well-beloved," as no other people are (ch. i. 2, 3; ii. 6; iii. 12, etc.; and ch. xl. 1, 11; xli. 8, 9; xliii. 1, 15, etc.). But they have rebelled against him, they have broken the covenant, they have provoked him by their sins (ch. i. 2—4, 21—23; v. 4; xliii. 22—24; xlviii. 1—8; lxiii. 10, etc.), by oppression and injustice (ch. i. 17, 23; iii. 12, 15; v. 7, 23; lix. 8, 13, 14), by their idolatries (ch. i. 29; ii. 8, 20; xxxi. 7; xl. 19, 20; xli. 7; xliv. 9—20; lvii. 5), by their shedding of innocent blood (ch. i. 15, 21; iv. 4; lix. 3, 7). And for this they have been in his counsels cast off, rejected, put away, forsaken (ch. i. 15; ii. 6; iii. 8; iv. 6, etc., in Part I.; and ch. xlii. 18—25; xliii. 28; xlix. 14, etc., in Part III.), carried into captivity (ch. v. 13; vi. 11, 12; xiv. 3, etc., and ch. xlii. 22; xliii. 5, 6; xlv. 13; xlviii. 20), to Babylon (ch. xiv. 2—4; xxxix. 6, 7; xlvii. 6; xlviii. 20, etc.). They are not, however, wholly cast off; God is chastening them, and will bring back a "remnant" (ch. vi. 13; x. 20—22; xi. 12; xiv. 1—3, etc.; and ch. xliii. 1—6; xlviii. 9—20; xlix. 25, etc.), and plant them again in their own land (vi. 13; x. 21; xiv. 1; xxxv. 10; and ch. xliv. 26; xlv. 13; li. 11, etc.), and give them peace and prosperity (ch. xi. 11—16; xii.; xiv. 3; xxv. 6—8; xxxii. 15—18; xxxv. 1—10; and ch. xl. 9—11; xliii. 19, 20; xlix. 8—13; li. 11; lii. 7—10, etc.). And then for their greater glory, he will call the Gentiles, and join the Gentiles with them into one Church or nation (ch. xi. 10; xxv. 6; xlii. 6; xlix. 6; lv. 5; lx. 3, etc.). Of this nation there will be a great King (ch. ix. 6, 7; xxiv. 23; xxxii. 1; xxxiii. 17; xlii. 1—4; xlix. 1—12, etc.), who will reign in "God's holy mountain" (ch. ii. 2; xi. 9; lvi. 7; lvii. 13; lxv. 11, 25; lxvi. 20) over his holy people perpetually. This "King" will be also a Redeemer (ch. i. 27; xxxv. 9, 10; xli. 14; lix. 20) and a Saviour (ch. xxxv. 4; liii. 5—12); he will reign in righteousness

[1] Dr. S. Davidson, 'Introduction to the Old Testament,' vol. ii. p. 54.

and peace (ch. ix. 7; xxxii. 1, 17; xlii. 1—4; xlix. 8—10), in a place where the voice of weeping will be heard no more (ch. xxxv. 10; li. 11; lxv. 19), and where there will be no more hurt nor destruction (ch. xi. 9; lxv. 25).

Among the favourite images which pervade the book, and belong alike to the disputed and the undisputed chapters, may be noticed—

(1) The image of "light" and "darkness," used in a spiritual sense for moral ignorance and moral enlightenment. We are rendered so familiar with the imagery by the constant employment of it in the New Testament, that we are apt to regard it as biblical generally, and not as characterizing particular authors. The metaphorical use of "light" and "darkness" is, however, rare in the Old Testament, and characterizies three books only—Job, the Psalms, and Isaiah. Isaiah is the only *prophet* in whose writings the imagery is at all frequent. He uses the word "light" in a metaphorical sense at least eighteen times, and "darkness" at least sixteen, contrasting the two together in nine. Of the contrasts, four occur in undisputed chapters (ch. v. 20, 30; ix. 2; xiii. 10), five in disputed ones (ch. xlii. 16; l. 10; lviii. 10; lix. 9; lx. 1—3). Of the other uses, seven are in undisputed (ch. ii. 5; viii. 20, 22; ix. 19; x. 17; xxix. 18; xxx. 26), and nine in disputed chapters (ch. xlii. 6, 7; xlv. 3; xlvii. 5; xlix. 6, 9; li. 4; lx. 19, 20).

(2) The images of "blindness" and "deafness," for a similar condition, especially when self-induced. This is a use almost peculiar to Isaiah among Old Testament writers, and occurs at least twelve times—four times in undisputed chapters (ch. vi. 10; xxix. 10, 18; xxxii. 3), and eight in disputed ones (ch. xxxv. 5; xlii. 7, 16, 18, 19; xliii. 8; xliv. 18; lvi. 9).

(3) The image of humanity as "a flower that fadeth," or "a leaf that fadeth," occurs in ch. i. 30; xviii. 15 (undisputed), and in ch. xl. 7 and lxiv. 6 (disputed).

(4) The image of a "rod," "stem," or "sprout," applied to the Messiah, occurs in ch. xi. 1, 10 and in ch. liii. 2. The latter is a disputed, the former an undisputed chapter.

(5) The imagery expressive of the final peace and prosperity of Messiah's kingdom is closely similar, almost identical, in the "true Isaiah" and the "other writers;" *e.g.* ch. ii. 4, "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Ch. xi. 5—9, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . . And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Ch. lxv. 24, 25, "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the

lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

(6) The image of "water," for spiritual life and refreshment, occurs in both the disputed and the undisputed chapters, most frequently in the former, but still unmistakably in the latter also (comp. ch. xxx. 25 and xxxiii. 21 with ch. xxxv. 6; xli. 17, 18; xliii. 19, 20; lv. 1; lviii. 11; lxvi. 12).

(7) The comparison of God with a potter, and of a man with the vessel which he fashions, is found both in ch. xxix. 16, an undisputed chapter, and also in two of the disputed chapters (ch. xlv. 9 and lxiv. 8).

(8) Jerusalem is represented as a tent, with stakes, cords, etc., both in ch. xxxii. 20, an undisputed chapter, and in ch. liv. 2, a disputed one.

(9) Israel's purification from sin is described as the purging of dross from a metal, both in ch. i. 25 (undisputed) and in ch. xlviii. 10 (disputed).

(10) Other examples of metaphors common to the disputed and undisputed chapters are the metaphor of "tow," for something weak and easily consumed (ch. i. 31; xliii. 17); of "stubble," for the same (ch. v. 24; xl. 24; xli. 2; xlvii. 14); of "the wilderness blossoming," for a time of spiritual well-being (ch. xxxii. 15; xxxv. 1, 2; li. 3; lv. 12, 13); of "drunkenness," for spiritual infatuation (ch. xxix. 9; li. 21, "drunken, but not with wine"); of the "healing of men's wounds," for God's forgiveness of sin (ch. i. 6; xxx. 26; liii. 5; lvii. 18); of "an overflowing stream," for an invading host (ch. viii. 7, 8; xvii. 12, 13; lix. 19); of a "whirlwind," for the rush of chariot-wheels (ch. v. 28; lxvi. 15); of the "dove's note," for lamentation (ch. xxxviii. 14; lix. 11); of "the worm," for decay or dissolution (ch. xiv. 11; li. 8); of a nation "eating its own flesh," for internal discord and disunion (ch. ix. 20; xlix. 18); of "shadow," for God's protection (ch. xxv. 4; xxxii. 2; xlix. 2; li. 16); of "a feast of fat things," for spiritual blessings (ch. xxv. 6; lv. 2); of "earth bursting out into singing," for mankind rejoicing (ch. xxxv. 2; lv. 12); and of "harlotry," for spiritual unfaithfulness (ch. i. 21; lvii. 3, etc.).

Among the other rhetorical ornaments which characterize Isaiah's style in the undisputed chapters, there is not one which does not also characterize the disputed ones. Dramatic representation, pointed antithesis, play upon words, strong expressions, vivid descriptions, amplifications, variety, are as noticeable in the one set as in the other, as may be seen by reference to the passages already quoted in pp. xiii.—xvi. Even the very peculiar ornament called *ἐπαναφορά*, or the repetition of a word or words at the end of a sentence previously used at the beginning, is to be found alike in both, and can scarcely be said to be more frequent in the one set than in the other (see ch. i. 7; iv. 3; vi. 11; viii. 9; xiii. 10; xiv. 25; xv. 8; xxx. 20; and ch. xxxiv. 7; xl. 19; xlii. 15, 19; xlviii. 21; li. 13; liii. 6, 7; liv. 4, 13; lviii. 2; lix. 8).

4. The similarity of the disputed with the undisputed chapters in little characteristic expressions has frequently been pointed out, but cannot be

omitted in a review like the present. Note especially the following: (1) the designation of God as "the Holy One of Israel" (ch. i. 4; v. 19, 24; x. 20; xii. 6; xvii. 7; xxix. 19; xxx. 11, 12, 15; xxxi. 1; and ch. xxxvii. 23; xli. 14, 16, 20; xliii. 3, 14; xlv. 11; xlvii. 4; xlviii. 17; xlix. 7; liv. 5; lv. 5; lx. 9, 14); (2) the combination of "Jacob" with "Israel" (ch. ix. 8; x. 21, 22; xiv. 1; xvii. 3, 4; xxvii. 6; xxix. 23; and ch. xl. 27; xli. 8; xlii. 24; xliii. 1, 22, 28; xliv. 1, 5, 23; xlv. 4; xlvi. 3); (3) the phrase, "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (ch. i. 20; xl. 5; lviii. 14); (4) the unusual form, *yomar Yehovah*, or *yomar Elohim*, in the middle or at the end of a statement (ch. i. 11, 18; xxxiii. 10; and also in ch. xl. 1, 25; xli. 21; lxvi. 9); (5) the quasi-hypostatic recognition of "the Spirit of the Lord" (ch. xi. 2; xxxiv. 16; xl. 7, 13; xlviii. 16; lix. 19; lxi. 1, etc.); (6) the application of the term "Maker" to God *in the plural* (ch. x. 15; liv. 5); (7) the frequent mention of *tohu*, "chaos" (ch. xxiv. 10; xxix. 21; xxxiv. 11; xl. 17, 23; xli. 29; xliv. 9; xlv. 18, 19; lix. 4); (8) the frequent mention of "lifting up an ensign" (ch. v. 26; xi. 10, 12; xiii. 2; xviii. 3; and ch. xlix. 22; lxii. 10); (9) the designation of God's people as "outcasts" or "outcasts of Israel" (ch. xi. 12; xvi. 3, 4; xxvii. 13; and lvi. 8); (10) the peculiar expression, "from henceforth, even for ever" (ch. ix. 7 and lix. 21); (11) the declaration that God's wrath against his people endures but "a little while" (ch. xxvi. 20 and liv. 7, 8); (12) the use of the rare word *nâkoakh* for "right things," "uprightness" (ch. xxvi. 10; xxx. 10; lvii. 2; lix. 14); (13) the phrase, "Who shall turn it back?" to express the irreversibility of God's doings (ch. xiv. 27 and xliii. 13,—in both places as the concluding clause); (14) the expression, "Peace, peace," for "perfect peace" (ch. xxvi. 3 and lvii. 19), only used elsewhere in 1 Chron. xii. 18.

5. Among correspondences, in the way of repetition, may be noted the following:—

Ch. i. 13, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me."	Ch. lxvi. 3, "He that offereth an oblation is as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol."
Ch. i. 29, "Ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen."	Ch. lxvi. 17, "They sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens."
Ch. ix. 7, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."	Ch. xxxvii. 32, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this."
Ch. xi. 9, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."	Ch. lxv. 25, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."
Ch. xi. 7, "The lion shall eat straw like the ox."	Ch. lxv. 25, "The lion shall eat straw like the bullock."
Ch. xiv. 24, "As I have purposed, so shall it stand."	Ch. xlvi. 10, "My counsel shall stand."
Ch. xvi. 11, "My bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab."	Ch. lxiii. 15, "The sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me, are they restrained?"

Ch. xxiv. 19, 20, "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage."

Ch. xxiv. 23, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion."

Ch. xxv. 8, "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."

Ch. xxvi. 1, "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

Ch. xxvii. 1, "In that day the Lord, with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea."

Ch. li. 6, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner."

Ch. lx. 19, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting Light."

Ch. lxv. 19, "The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying."

Ch. lx. 18, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation."

Ch. li. 9, "Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?"

Correspondences of a more recondite kind have also been pointed out,[1] where the later portion of the prophecy appears to fill up and complete the earlier. Such are the following: In Part I. Israel is threatened: "Ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth (ch. i. 40); in Part III. the threat is accomplished, and Israel confesses: "We all do fade as a leaf" (ch. lxiv. 6). In Part I. God promises "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees" (ch. xxv. 6); in Part III. he issues an invitation to the world at large to partake of it: "Come ye... buy wine and milk without money and without price ... eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (ch. lv. 1, 2). In Part I. Jerusalem is represented as desolate and sitting in the dust (ch. iii. 26); in Part III. she is bidden to "arise" from the dust and shake herself free of it (ch. lii. 2). In Part I. Israel is "a garden that hath no water" (ch. i. 30)—a vineyard on which the clouds have been commanded to "rain no rain" (ch. v. 6); in Part III. the promise is made that she shall "be like a watered garden" (ch. lviii. 11). God (in Part I.) forsook her for her iniquities (ch. v. 5—7; xxxii. 10—14); but in Part III. the promise is made, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate. ... And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken" (ch. lxii. 4—12). Again, in Part I., Jehovah is set forth as "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty" to his people (ch. xxviii. 5); while in Part III. is found the complement of the image, Israel being set forth as "a crown of

[1] See 'The Bible True to Itself,' by Dr. Moody-Stewart (2nd. edit., London, 1884), pp. 374—414.

glory and a royal diadem" in the hand of Jehovah (ch. lxii. 3). The "thorns and briars," which are represented in Part I. as all that Israel produces (ch. v. 6; xxxii. 13), give place in Part III. to a better growth: "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree" (ch. lv. 13); "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses" (ch. xliv. 4).

It may also be observed that the local colouring, including the allusions to scenery and natural objects, to mountains, forests, trees, rocks, streams, fertile fields, etc., has the same cast in both the earlier and the later chapters. The scenery is throughout that of Syria and Palestine, not that of Babylonia or of Egypt, except in one short passage (ch. xix. 5—10). The writer's admiration is for Lebanon, with its cedars that are high and lifted up (ch. ii. 13; x. 34; xiv. 8; xxix. 17; xxxiii. 9; xxxv. 2; xxxvii. 24; xl. 16; lx. 13); its "choice firs," its "pines," and "box trees;" for Bashan, with its oaks (ch. ii. 13) and orchards (ch. xxxiii. 9); for Carmel (ch. v. 18; xvi. 10; xxix. 17; xxxii. 15, 16; xxxv. 2; xxxvii. 24); for Sharon (ch. xxxiii. 9; xxxv. 2; lxv. 10); for the rich Gilead region, with its vineyards and "summer fruits," and glad harvests (ch. xv. 9, 10). The trees are all of them Palestinian, or at any rate Syrian—cedars, oaks, firs, pines, box trees, sycamores, cypresses, shittah trees, olives, vines, myrtles. The palm, which is the great glory of Babylonia, obtains no mention. The abounding river Euphrates occurs once only (ch. viii. 7), and that once is in Part I. Elsewhere the water spoken of consists of "streams," "brooks," "fountains," "pools" or reservoirs, "springs," and the like (ch. xv. 7; xxii. 11; xxx. 25; xxxv. 7; xli. 18; xlviii. 21; lviii. 11, etc.)—all forms of water familiar to dwellers in Palestine. Rocks, "ragged rocks," "clefts in the rock," "holes in the rock," are also portions of the writer's scenery (ch. ii. 10, 19, 21; xlii. 22; lvii. 5)—things unknown in Babylonia. Mountains, woods, forests, wild beasts of the forest, bears, are equally within his cognizance, and furnish him with frequent images (ch. ii. 14; ix. 18; x. 18, 34; xiii. 4; xl. 12; xlii. 11; liv. 10; lv. 12, 13; lvi. 9; lix. 11, etc.). Mr. Cheyne confesses the force of this entire argument, when he says—

"Some passages of II. Isaiah (*i.e.* ch. xl.—lxvi.) are in various degrees really favourable to the theory of a Palestinian origin. Thus, in ch. lvii. 5, the reference to torrent-beds is altogether inapplicable to the alluvial plains of Babylonia; and equally so is that to subterranean 'holes' in ch. xlii. 22; and, though no doubt Babylonia was more wooded in ancient times than it is at present, it is certain that the trees mentioned in ch. xli. 19 were not for the most part natives of that country, while the date-palm, the commonest of all the Babylonian trees, is not once referred to."[1]

It is evident that the "Palestinian origin" of II. Isaiah, though not conclusively proving Isaiah's authorship, is in thorough harmony with it, and has an appreciable value as a subsidiary argument in favour of the unity of the book.

[1] 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. ii. p. 211.

§ 7. Literature of Isaiah.

The earliest, and one of the best, comments on Isaiah is that of Jerome, written in Latin, about the year A.D. 410. It is divided into eighteen books, and contains much that is of the highest value, especially on philological and geographical points. Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew was great, and his acquaintance with the works of the Jewish rabbis extensive. But his exegesis is to a large extent fanciful. Jerome was followed, towards the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, by Procopius of Gaza, who wrote, in Greek, a long and elaborate work, which was little known until it was translated into Latin by Curterius towards the close of the sixteenth century ('In Esaiam Prophetam Commentationum Epitome,' Græce et Latine, J. Curterio interprete, folio, Paris, 1580). Christian interpretation had then a long pause, and the exegesis of Isaiah was carried on in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by Jewish scholars, of whom the most eminent were Rashi (died 1107), Aben Ezra (died 1167), and D. Kimchi (died 1235). Rashi's works are printed in the rabbinical Bibles, and have been partly translated into Latin by Breithaupt (3 vols., Gotha, 1710). Aben Ezra's commentary on Isaiah has been translated by Dr. Friedländer, and published, with the text, for the Society of Hebrew Literature, by Trübner and Co. (London, translation in 1873, text in 1877). D. Kimchi's work was printed, with a Latin version, at Ulyssipolis, in 1492. Of these three commentators, Aben Ezra is regarded as the best. He is clear-headed, laborious, and clever, though somewhat given to scepticism. The labours of the Jewish writers were utilized for the Church by Nicolas de Lyra, a Franciscan monk, about A.D. 1300–40. His critical work, entitled 'Postillæ Perpetuæ,' in eighty-five books, was published by the Benedictines at Antwerp in 1634. It has considerable merit, though somewhat too venturous in its allegorical interpretations, as the author himself felt in his later years.

With the Reformation an increased amount of attention was devoted to the writings of "the evangelical prophet." Calvin ('Commentationes in Isaiam,' folio, Geneva, 1551) gave the views on the subject taken by the more advanced Reformers; while Musculus ('In Esaiam Prophetam Commentarii locupletissimi,' Bâle, 1570) wrote from the Lutheran standpoint, Marloratus ('Esaiæ Prophetia, cum Catholica Expositione Ecclesiastica,' folio, Paris, 1564) and Pintus ('Commentaria in Esaiam,' folio, Lyons, 1561) from the Roman. Of these commentaries, Calvin's is by far the most important. "Calvin's works," says Diestel, "offer even yet a rich store of biblical knowledge." His comment on Isaiah will be found largely quoted in the present work. Another writer on Isaiah, belonging to the Reformation period, was Pellicanus, a good Hebraist, whose notes upon Isaiah will be found in the third volume of his 'Commentaria Sacra' (3 vols., Zurich, 1540).

The seventeenth century did not do very much for the criticism or exegesis of Isaiah. Its chief theological writers belonged to the Dutch school, and comprised Hugo Grotius, whose scanty notes upon Isaiah, in his 'Annotata ad Vetus Testamentum,' vol. ii. (folio, Paris, 1644), are of little value; De Dieu, who wrote 'Animadversiones in Veteris Testamenti Libros Omnes' (Leyden, 1648); Schultens, whose 'Animadversiones Criticæ et Philologicæ ad Varia Loca Veteris Testamenti' (Amsterdam, 1709) were highly esteemed by Gesenius; and Vitringa, whose great work ('Commentarius in Librum Prophetiarum Jesaiæ,' 2 vols. folio, Leuwarden, 1704–10) is still regarded as "a vast mine of rich materials" by modern critics. This commentary is characterized by considerable learning and much sound sense, but is spoilt by its diffuseness.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century, England began to show her interest in the study of the greatest of Hebrew prophets, and to produce commentaries and translations. The lead was taken by Robert Lowth, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of London, who published, in 1753, a work on the 'Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,' which he followed up, in 1778, by 'Isaiah: a New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation, and Notes Critical, Philological, and Explanatory' (1 vol. 4to). This work excited great attention. It was translated into German in the year following, by J. R. Koppe, under the title, 'Dr. R. Lowth's Jesaias neu übersetzt, nebst einer Einleitung' (2 vols. 8vo, Leipzig, 1779), and provoked criticism both in Germany and in England. Kocher in Germany criticized its emendations of the Hebrew text in a small

volume, entitled, 'Vindiciæ S. Textus Hebræi Esaiæ Vetis' (Berne, 1786). In England, a layman, Mr. M. Dodson, endeavoured to improve upon it in his work, 'Isaiah: a New Translation, with Notes Supplementary to those of Bishop Lowth,' by a layman (1 vol. 8vo, London, 1790); and this work was shortly followed by another of the same kind, from the pen of a Dr. Joseph Stock, called, 'The Book of the Prophet Isaiah in Hebrew and English, the Hebrew metrically arranged, and the Translation altered from that of Bishop Lowth, with Notes,' etc. (Bath, 1803). Bishop Lowth's work has, however, held its ground against all attacks, and, though far from faultless, still deserves the attention of students.

A French translation of Isaiah was published in the year 1760, by M. Deschamps ('Esaias, Traduction Nouvelle,' 12mo, Paris); and a second German translation ('Jesaias neu übersetzt') by Hensler, in 1788. J. C. Döderlein also published the text, with a Latin version (8vo, Altorf), in 1780. None of these works is of any considerable merit.

The first step in advance that was made after Bishop Lowth's labours was by the publication of the comment and translation of Gesenius ('Philologisch-kritischer und historischer Commentar über den Jesaia,' 2 vols. 8vo, Leipzig, 1820, 1821). Gesenius, as a Hebraist, far excelled Lowth. He possessed more historical and antiquarian knowledge. His work, we are told, "is hardly yet superseded." He had, however, the demerit of being a pronounced rationalist, an absolute unbeliever in either miracle or prophecy, and his exegesis is thus poor and shallow, nay, almost wholly worthless.

Gesenius was followed by Hitzig, a writer of the same class and type. Hitzig's work on Isaiah ('Der Prophet Jesaia übersetzt und ausgelehrt,' 8vo, Heidelberg, 1833) intensified Gesenius's rationalizing tone, but had merits which must not be denied. Hitzig's intellect is acute, his historical knowledge extensive, his grasp upon Hebrew grammar unusual. He is sometimes overbold, sometimes oversubtle; but the serious student can scarcely dispense with the light to be derived from his explanations. Rosenmüller's 'Scholia in Esaiam' (3 vols. 8vo, Leipzig, 1811–20) are also frequently of great service, though he also belongs to the rationalistic or sceptical school. Contemporary with Hitzig, but somewhat later in publishing his views, was the distinguished critic and historian Ewald, 'the second founder of the science of the Hebrew language,' acute, philosophic, profound, of a poetic temperament. Ewald's criticism of Isaiah will be found, partly in his general work upon the prophets ('Die Propheten des Alten Bundes,' Berlin, 1st edit., 2 vols. 8vo, 1840–41; 2nd edit., 3 vols. 8vo, 1867–68), partly in his 'History of the People of Israel' ('Geschichte des Volkes Israel,' Göttingen, 5 vols. 8vo, 1843–55), translated into English, and published in five volumes by Longman, (London, 1869–71). Ewald is to be read with caution. He is overbold, oversubtle, overfond of minute systematizing, and possessed of an overweening self-confidence, which makes him put forward the merest theories as ascertained facts. Another commentator of importance, belonging to the sceptical school, is Knobel, whose work ('Der Prophet Jesaia erklärt,' forming the sixth volume of the 'Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament,' Leipzig, 1854, 2nd edit.) will be, for its linguistic and archæological notices, found of service by every student.

The anti-rationalistic school in Germany has not been idle on its side in the Isaian controversy. Hengstenberg's views are contained in his 'Christology of the Old Testament,' translated for Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh, 1854–7), and are well worthy of attention. Dreschler produced, between 1845 and 1851, his valuable treatise, 'Der Prophet Jesaja übersetzt und erklärt,' which was continued after his death by Hahn and Delitzsch. Kleinert had, in 1829, published a noteworthy defence of the genuineness of the whole of Isaiah ('Die Æchtheit des Jesaias,' Berlin, 1829). This was followed, in 1850, by the excellent work of Stier ('Jesaias, nicht Pseudo-Jesaias,' Barmen, 1850), a comment on ch. xl.—lxvi., "of real value for its spiritual insight;" and in 1866, Delitzsch, the continuator of Dreschler, produced what is generally allowed to be the best and most complete of all existing commentaries ('Commentar über Jesaias,' 1st edit., 1866; 3rd edit., 1879) which has been made accessible to the English reader in Clark's Foreign Theological Library.

Of recent English commentaries on Isaiah, the most important are the following: Dr. E. Henderson, 'The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, translated from the Hebrew, with a Commentary, Critical, Philological, and Exegetical' (1 vol. 8vo, London, 1st edit., 1840; 2nd edit., 1857); J. A. Alexander, 'Isaiah, Translated and Explained' (2 vols. 8

New York, 1851–2); Professor Birks, 'Commentary on Isaiah, Critical, Historical, and Prophetical' (1st edit., Cambridge, 1871; 2nd edit., London, 1878); Dr. Kay, 'Commentary on Isaiah' (London, Murray, 1875, published in vol. vii. of the 'Speaker's Commentary'); and Rev. T. K. Cheyne, 'The Prophecies of Isaiah, a New Translation, with Commentary and Appendices' (2 vols. 8vo, London, 1882). Of these the commentaries of Dr. Kay and Mr. Cheyne are specially to be commended—the former for its boldness and originality, the latter for its thoroughness, its large grasp of the historical facts, and its candour and fairness towards critics of different views. Both writers are remarkable for their profound knowledge of Hebrew, and acquaintance with other kindred dialects. Mr. Cheyne is distinguished by the large use which he makes of the recently discovered cuneiform inscriptions.

Among minor works connected with Isaiah, and worthy of the student's attention, may be enumerated, C. P. Caspari's 'Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Buch Jesaja' (Berlin, 1848); Meier, 'Der Prophet Jesaja' (Pforzheim, 1850); S. D. Luzzatto, 'Il Profeta Isaia Volgarizzato e Commentato ad uso degli Israeliti' (Padua, 1855–67); G. Vance Smith, 'Prophecies relating to Nineveh and the Assyrians' (1 vol. 8vo, London, 1857); Dean Payne Smith, 'The Authenticity and Messianic Interpretation of the Prophecies of Isaiah vindicated' (Oxford and London, 1862); Rev. Rowland Williams, 'The Hebrew Prophets,' translated afresh from the original (2 vols. 8vo, London, 1866–71); E. Reuss, 'Les Prophètes' (2 vols. 8vo, Paris, 1876); Neuhauer and Dr. Driver, 'The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah according to the Jewish Interpreters' (Oxford, 1877); Rev. T. K. Cheyne, 'Notes and Criticisms on the Hebrew Text of Isaiah' (1 vol. 8vo, London, 1868); and 'The Book of Isaiah chronologically arranged' (1 vol. 8vo, London, 1870); Klostermann, 'Jesaja cap. xl.—lxvi., eine Bitte um Hülfe in grosser Noth,' published in the *Zeitschrift für lutherische Theologie* of 1876 (pp. 1—60); Urwick, 'The Servant of Jehovah' (1 vol. 8vo, Edinburgh, 1877); F. Köstlin, 'Jesaia und Jeremia, Ihr Leben und Wirken aus ihren Schriften dargestellt' (Berlin, 1879); Moody-Stuart, 'The Old Isaiah' (Edinburgh, 1880); H. Krüger, 'Essai sur la théologie d'Ésaie xl.—lxvi. (Paris, 1881); and W. Robertson Smith, 'The Prophets of Israel, and their Place in History to the Close of the Eighth Century B.C.' (Edinburgh, 1882).

The following English translations have been published, besides those of the Authorized and Revised Versions: (1) 'The Prophecye of Isaye,' by George Joy, 8vo, (Strasburg, 1531); (2) 'Isaiah, a New Translation, with a Preliminary Dissertation,' etc., by Bishop Lowth (London, 1778); (3) 'Isaiah, a New Translation, with Notes supplementary to those of Bishop Lowth,' by M. Dodson (London, 1790); (4) 'Isaiah Versified,' by Dr. G. Butt (London, 1785); (5) 'The Book of Isaiah in Hebrew and English,' by Dr. Joseph Stock (Bath, 1803); (6) 'Isaiah Translated, with Critical and Explanatory Notes,' by Rev. A. Jenour, (Oxford, 1830); (7) 'Isaiah Translated,' by Rev. J. Jones (London, 1830); and (8) 'The Prophecies of Isaiah, a New Translation, with Commentary and Appendices,' by Rev. T. K. Cheyne (London, 1882).

THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

PART I. EARLIER PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH (CH. I.—XXXV.).

SECTION I. THE GREAT ARRAIGNMENT (CH. I.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—TITLE OF THE WORK. It is questioned whether the title can be regarded as Isaiah's, or as properly belonging to the work, and it is suggested that it is rather a heading invented by a collector who brought together into a volume such prophecies of Isaiah as were known to him, the collection being a much smaller one than that which was made ultimately. In favour of this view it is urged (1) that the prophecies, as we have them, do not all "concern Judah and Jerusalem;" (2) that there is a mistake in the title, which Isaiah could not have made, none of the prophecies belonging to the reign of Uzziah. But it may be answered, that, in the scriptural sense, *all* prophecy "concerns Judah and Jerusalem," *i.e.* the people and city of God; and, further, that it is quite impossible to prove that no part of the "vision" was seen in the reign of Uzziah. There are no means of knowing whether Isaiah collected his prophecies into a volume himself or whether the collection was the work of others. In either case, the existing title must be regarded as designed for the entire work. All the earlier prophecies—those of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, and Zephaniah—have some title introducing them.

Ver. 1.—**The vision** (comp. Obad. i. 1; Nah. i. 1). The term is probably used in a collective sense, but is also intended to suggest the intrinsic unity of the entire body of prophecies put forth by Isaiah. As prophets were originally called "seers" (1 Sam. ix. 9), so prophecy was called "vision;" and this latter use continued long after the other (comp. 1 Chron. xvii. 15; Ezek. xii. 27; Dan. ix. 23; Obad. i. 1, etc.). **Isaiah** the son of **Amoz** (comp. ch. ii. 1; xiii. 1; xxxvii. 2, etc.; 2 Kings xx. 1; 2 Chron. xxxii. 32). The signification of the name *Isaiah* is "the salvation of Jehovah." The name Amoz (*Amôts*) is not to be confused with Amos (*'Amôs*), who seems to have been a contemporary (Amos i. 1). **Concerning Judah and Jerusalem.** The prophecies of Isaiah concern primarily the kingdom of Judah, not that of Israel. They embrace a vast variety of nations and countries (see especially ch. xiii., xv.—xxi., xxiii., xlvii.); but these nations and countries are spoken of "only because of the relation in which they stand to Judah and Jerusalem" (Kay), or at any rate to the people of God, symbolized under those names. Jerusalem occupies a prominent place in the prophecies (see ch. i. 8, 21; iii. 16—26; iv. 3—6; **xxix.**

1—8; xxxi. 4—9, etc.). **In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.** Uzziah (or Azariah, as he is sometimes called) reigned fifty-two years—probably from B.C. 811 to B.C. 759; Jotham sixteen years—from B.C. 759 to B.C. 743; Ahaz also sixteen years—from B.C. 743 to B.C. 727; and Hezekiah twenty-nine years—from B.C. 727 to B.C. 698. Isaiah probably prophesied only in the later years of Uzziah, say from B.C. 760; but as he certainly continued his prophetical career till Sennacherib's invasion of Judæa (ch. xxxvii. 5), which was not earlier than B.C. 705, he must have exercised the prophet's office for at least fifty-six years. The lowest possible estimate of the duration of his ministry is forty-seven years—from the last year of Uzziah, B.C. 759, to the fourteenth of Hezekiah (ch. xxxviii. 5). The highest known to us is sixty-four years—from the fourth year before Uzziah's death (B.C. 762) to the last year of Hezekiah (B.C. 698). (See 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. v. p. 5.)

Vers. 2—6.—GOD'S COMPLAINT AGAINST HIS PEOPLE. The groundwork of Isaiah's entire prophecy is Judah's defection from God. God's people have sinned, done amiss, dealt wickedly. The hour of vengeance approaches. Punishment has begun, and will go on, continually increasing in severity. National repentance would avert God's judgments, but the nation will not repent. God's vengeance will fall, and by it a remnant will be purified, and return to God, and be his true people. In the present section the indictment is laid. Judah's sins are called to her remembrance.

Ver. 2.—**Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.** "A grave and magnificent exordium! All nature is invoked to hear Jehovah make complaint of the ingratitude of his people" (Rosenmüller). The invocation is cast in the same form with that so common in Deuteronomy (iv. 26; xxx. 19; xxxi. 28; xxxii. 1), and seems to indicate familiarity with that book. The idea extends widely among sacred and other poets (see Ps. l. 3, 4; Micah vi. 1, 2; Æsch., 'P. V.,' ll. 88—92). **The Lord hath spoken;** rather, *the Lord* (literally, *Jehovah*) *speaketh* (so Lowth, Cheyne, and Gesenius). The speech of Jehovah follows in vers. 2, 3. **I have nourished and brought up children;** literally, (*my*) *sons I have made great and high;* i.e. I have raised Israel to greatness and exalted him among the nations. Notwithstanding their disobedience, God still acknowledges them as his "sons." **They have rebelled against me.** The verb used is generally rendered in our version "transgressed" (see Jer. iii. 13, Hos. vii. 13; Amos iv. 4); but it may also have the stronger sense here assigned it. Lowth translates, "revolted from me;" Gesenius, "fallen away from me;" Cheyne, "broken away from me."

Ver. 3.—**The ox . . . the ass.** The ox and the ass are probably selected as the least intelligent of domesticated animals (so Jerome, Rosenmüller, and Gesenius). Yet even they recognize their owner or master. Jeremiah contrasts the brutish stupidity of Israel with the wise instinct of animals that have not been domesticated, as the stork, the turtle-dove, the crane, and the swallow (viii. 7). **Israel doth not know;** *i.e.* does not acknowledge its Master and Owner, pays him no respect, does not recognize him as either Owner or Master. **My people.** Compare the formula, so frequent in Exodus, "Let *my people* go" (vii. 16; viii. 1, 20; ix. 1, etc.). Israel was God's people by election (Gen. xv. 13), by covenant (Exod. xix. 5—8; xxiv. 3—8), by pardoning grace (Exod. xxxiii. 12—17). Despite all their backslidings, he had not yet cast them off. They are still "his people" in Isaiah from first to last, standing in contrast with "the nations," or "the Gentiles," among whom they are to be "set as a sign" (ch. lxvi. 19). **Doth not consider.** Gesenius translates, "doth not consider *thereof;*" Cheyne, "is without understanding." Bishop Lowth retains the words of the Authorized Version. The meaning would seem to be, "My people doth not consider *me,* doth not reflect on my relation to them as Lord and Master."

Ver. 4.—**Ah sinful nation.** These are the words of Isaiah, not of Jehovah. The prophet, having delivered God's message in vers. 2 and 3, proceeds to impress and enforce it on the people by remarks of his own. He begins with a lamentation over their wickedness and impenitence; "Ah sinful nation!" or "Alas for the sinful nation!"—the nation called to be holy (Exod. xix. 6; Lev. xx. 26, etc.), but sunk in sin and wickedness. How sad their condition! How almost hopeless! **Laden with iniquity;** literally, *heavy with guilt.* But our version well expresses the sense. As the psalmist says, "My sins have gone up over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear" (Ps. xxxviii. 4; cf. Matt. xi. 28). **A seed of evil-doers.** Not descendants of evil-doers, but "an evil-doing seed," or "race" (*σπέρμα πονηρόν,* LXX.; comp. ch. xiv. 20; lxi. 9; lxv. 23). **Children that are corrupters;** literally, *sons that do corruptly.* It is not their corrupting of others, though that might follow, but the corruption that was in themselves, which is spoken of. The corruption was both moral and doctrinal (see ver. 21). In corroboration of the fact, see 2 Chron. xxvii. 2. **They have forsaken**

the Lord. Not by renouncing his worship, which they still continued (see vers. 11—15), but by reducing it to a formality. The people "honoured him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him" (ch. xxix. 13). **They have provoked to anger**; rather, *despised* (Revised Version), or *scorned* (Kay, Cheyne), or *rejected with disdain* (Lowth), in allusion to their disobeying his commandments (see vers. 21—23). **The Holy One of Israel.** This title of God is a favourite one with Isaiah (see ch. v. 19, 24; x. 17, 20; xii. 6; xvii. 7; xxix. 19, 23; xxx. 11, 12, 15; xxxi. 1; xxxvii. 23; xli. 14, 16, 20; xliii. 3, 14; xlv. 11; xlix. 7; liv. 5; lv. 5; lx. 9, 14), and is very rarely used by the other sacred writers. We find it thrice in the Psalms (Ps. lxxi. 22; lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18); once in Kings (2 Kings xix. 22), but then in the mouth of Isaiah; twice in Jeremiah (l. 29; li. 5); and once in Ezekiel (xxxix. 7). According to Isaiah's conception of God, holiness is the most essential element of his nature (see ch. vi. 3, 5, 7). **They are gone away backward**; literally, *they are estranged backwards*; or, as Bishop Lowth paraphrases, "they are estranged from him; they have turned their back upon him." Instead of looking to God, and following after him, they "followed a multitude to do evil" (Exod. xxiii. 2).

Ver. 5.—**Why should ye, etc.?** Translate, *Why will ye be still smitten, revolting more and more?* or, *Why will ye persist in rebellion, and so be smitten yet more?* The Authorized Version does not express the sense, which is that suffering *must* follow sin—that if they still revolt, they must still be smitten for it—why, then, will they do so? Compare Ezekiel's "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (xviii. 31). **The whole head . . . the whole heart.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "*Every* head . . . *every* heart;" but Lowth, Gesenius, and Ewald agree with the Authorized Version. The prophet personifies Israel, and means to say that the *whole* head of the nation is diseased, its *whole* heart faint, or "prostrate with languor" (Kay). The head and heart represent respectively the intellectual and moral natures.

Ver. 6.—**From the sole of the foot even unto the head** (comp. Job ii. 7). From top to bottom, the body corporate is diseased throughout—there is no soundness in it (cf. Ps. xxxviii. 3, 7)—all is *one* wound, *one* livid bruise, *one* festering sore. Note the use of the singular number in the original. **They have not been closed**; literally, *they have not been pressed*; which is explained to mean (Aben Ezra, Kay) that they have not had the matter formed by suppuration pressed out of them. **Neither bound up**; *i.e.* not bandaged. **Neither mollified with ointment**; rather, *with oil.* On the treatment of wounds and ulcers with oil in ancient times, see Hippocrat., 'De Ulceribus,' § 4; Galen., 'De Compos. Medic.,' § 2; and comp. Luke x. 34. Recent medical science has revived the practice, and wounds of all kinds are now frequently treated with nothing but carbolic oil. The general sentiment of the entire passage is that there has been no medical treatment of the wounds of any kind; they have been left to themselves, to spread corruption over the whole body—no attempt has been made to cure them.

Ver. 7.—**Your country is desolate.** Metaphor is now dropped, and the prophet describes in strong but simple language the judgments of God, which have already followed the sins of the nation. First of all, their land is "a desolation." It has been recently ravaged by an enemy; the towns have been burnt, the crops devoured. There is nothing to determine who the enemy had been. Knobel supposes the Edomites and Philistines, who invaded Judæa in the time of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 17, 18), to be intended; Rosenmüller suggests the Israelites under Amaziah (2 Chron. xxv. 21—24); while Mr. Cheyne supposes the devastation to have been wrought by the Assyrians under Sargon. If we could be assured that the prophecies of Isaiah are arranged in chronological order, we should either have to accept Rosenmüller's view, or to suppose some invasion of Judæa to have taken place in the later years of Uzziah of which no mention is made by the authors of Kings and Chronicles; but it is impossible to be certain on what principle Isaiah's prophecies are arranged. The mention of "strangers" is in favour of the enemy having been actual foreigners, and therefore not the Israelites. **Your cities are burned with fire.** The common fate of cities taken in war. In the Assyrian sculptures we often see the torch applied to them. **Your land.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "your *tillage*." *Adamah* means "soil" or "ground" generally; but here no doubt denotes the ground which bore crops. **Strangers devour it**; *i.e.* "foreigners"—others than the sons of the soil—not necessarily persons of a different race, but still probably such persons. **In your presence**; before your eyes, as you look on—an aggravation of the affliction. **It is desolate, as overthrown by strangers**; literally, *it is a desolation, like an overthrow by strangers.* The near approach to repetition displeases moderns, who conjecture (1) that *zarim*, strangers, has another meaning, and should be here translated by "inundation" or "deluge" (Aben Ezra, Michaelis, Lowth); or (2) that it is a wrong reading, and should

be altered into *sodim*, a word not very different (Ewald, Cheyne). But "the return to words whose sounds are yet lingering in the ear" is characteristic of ancient writing, and a favourite practice of Isaiah's (Kay). The translation of the Authorized Version may therefore stand.

Ver. 8.—**The daughter of Zion.** Not "the faithful Church" (Kay), but the city of Jerusalem, which is thus personified. Comp. ch. xlvii. 1, 5, where Babylon is called the "daughter of the Chaldeans;" and Lam. i. 6; ii. 1, 4, 8, 10, where the phrase here used is repeated in the same sense. More commonly it designates the people without the city (Lam. ii. 13; iv. 22; Micah iii. 8, 10, 12; Zeph. iii. 14; Zech. ii. 10; ix. 9, etc.). **As a cottage**; rather, *as a booth* (Revised Version; see Lev. xxiii. 42). Vineyards required to be watched for a few weeks only as the fruit began to ripen; and the watchers, or keepers, built themselves, therefore, mere "booths" for their protection (Job xxvii. 18). These were frail, solitary dwellings—very forlorn, very helpless. Such was now Jerusalem. **As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers.** Cucumber-gardens required watching throughout the season, *i.e.* from spring to autumn, and their watcher needed a more solid edifice than a booth. Hence such gardens had "lodges" in them, *i.e.* permanent huts or sheds, such as those still seen in Palestine (Tristram's 'Natural History of Palestine,' p. 442). **As a besieged city.** Though not yet besieged, Jerusalem is as if besieged—isolated, surrounded by waste tracts, threatened.

Ver. 9.—**Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom.** Lowth and Cheyne prefer to divide the two clauses differently, and to translate, "Except the Lord of hosts had left us a remnant, within a little we should have been like Sodom." The "remnant" is that of the few godly men who still inhabit Jerusalem. The comparison of Jerusalem with Sodom is made again in ch. iii. 9, and is carried out at some length by Ezekiel (xvi. 44—57). It implies a condition of extreme depravity.

Vers. 10—15.—THE PEOPLE'S PLEA NO EXCUSE, BUT AN AGGRAVATION OF THEIR GUILT. The prophet supposes the people, by the mouth of their rulers, to meet the charge of rebellion with an appeal to the fact that they maintain all the outward ordinances of religion, as required by the Law, and are therefore blameless. This draws from him a burst of indignant eloquence, which the Holy Spirit directs him to put, mainly, into the mouth of God (vers. 11—15), denouncing such a pretence of religion as an aggravation of their sin, and characterizing their whole worship as an "abomination."

Ver. 10.—**Hear the word of the Lord**; *i.e.* "Do not *speak* to no purpose, but *hear*." The rulers are supposed to have begun their plea, but the prophet stops them. **Ye rulers of Sodom.** Having said in the preceding verse how nearly Jerusalem had suffered the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, the writer grows more bold, and proceeds to give Jerusalem the obnoxious names. Her "rulers," literally, *judges* (*kâtsin* in Hebrew corresponding to *kadi* in Arabic), are "rulers of Sodom;" her people are the "people of Gomorrah." There is as much wickedness, though it may be not the same wickedness, in "the daughter of Zion" at the existing time, as in the cities of the plain when God destroyed them. **The law of our God.** Not the Levitical Law, though the word used has generally that sense, but the "instruction" or "direction" that was about to be uttered (comp. Ps. lxxviii. 1; and see below, ch. ii. 3 and li. 4). See Mr. Cheyne's note on the passage.

Ver. 11.—**To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?** *Cui bono?* What good end do they serve? "Thinkest thou that I will eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. l. 13). God "delights not in burnt offerings." From the time of Samuel he had declared, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). David had said of him, "Sacrifice and meat offering thou wouldest not; burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin hast thou not required" (Ps. xl. 8, 9); and again, "I will not reprove thee because of thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt offerings, because they were not always before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goat out of thy folds; for all the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Ps. l. 8—10). Not, of course, that either David or Isaiah desired to abolish sacrifice, or had any commission so to do; but they were, both of them, anxious to impress on men that sacrifice, *by itself*, was nothing—that self-dedication, self-renunciation, true devotion of the heart, with its necessary concomitant obedience, must accompany sacrifice, for God to be pleased therewith. The sacrifices of a people such as is described in vers. 21—23 could not but be an offence to him. **Saith the Lord.** The phrase employed is unusual, and almost confined to Isaiah, occurring elsewhere only in Ps. xii. 5. Isaiah uses it again in ver. 18, and also in ch. xxxiii. 10; xli. 21; and lxvi. 9. It is explained to be emphatic, implying that this is what God says, and will say, con-

cerning the matter in hand, once and for ever (Kay). **I am full of the burnt offerings of rams**; rather, *I am overfull, satiated, wearied with them.* Rams formed a part of the required sacrifice on all great occasions, as at the Passover (Numb. xxviii. 19), at the Feast of Weeks (Numb. xxviii. 27), at the Feast of Tabernacles (Numb. xxix. 13, 17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32, 36), at the Feast of Trumpets (Numb. xxix. 2), and on the great Day of Atonement (Numb. xxix. 8). They were commanded as the sole sacrifice for a trespass offering (Lev. v. 16, 18). Under David were offered on one occasion "a thousand rams" (1 Chron. xxix. 21); and the occasions where seven rams formed the legitimate sacrifice were many. Unaccompanied by a proper frame of mind, each such offering was an offence to God, displeased him, wearied him. **The fat of fed beasts.** The fat was always regarded, both by the Hebrews and the Greeks, as especially suitable for sacrifice. It was burnt upon the altar in every case, even where the greater part of the victim was consumed as food (see Lev. i. 8, 12; iii. 3, 10, etc.; note particularly the expression in Lev. iii. 16, "All the fat is the Lord's"). "Fed beasts" are those which were kept separate in stalls or sheds for some time before the sacrifice, and given food in which there was nothing "unclean." The Paschal lambs were required to be thus separated and fed for four days (Exod. xii. 3, 6). **I delight not in the blood.** The blood, "which is the life" (Lev. xvii. 14), was to be sprinkled on the altar in every sacrifice of a victim. This sprinkling was of the very essence of the sacrifice (Lev. i. 5; iii. 2, 8, 13; iv. 6, 17, 25, 30, etc.). **Bullocks . . . lambs . . . he-goats.** These, together with rams, constituted all the sacrificial beasts of the Hebrews.

Ver. 12.—**When ye come to appear before me.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "to see my face;" but most other commentators (Gesenius, Delitzsch, Ewald, Kay) regard the phrase used as equivalent to that employed in Exod. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 16; and the passage as referring to that attendance in the temple at the three great annual festivals, which was required of all adult male Israelites. The requirement of the Law was still observed in the letter, but not in the spirit. They came with no true religious object. Hence the question which follows: **Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?** *This* was not what God had enjoined—a mere bodily attendance, a *trampling* of his courts with their feet, when their hearts were far from him.

Ver. 13.—**Bring no more vain oblations.** The command is not "Bring no more oblations," as though the daily oblation was to cease; but "bring no more oblations that are *vain* ones," *i.e.* empty and unreal—mere forms, without the proper corresponding spirit. The "oblation" spoken of is the *minchah*, or "meat offering," of Lev. ii. 1—11; Numb. xxviii. 12—31, which was a cake of fine flour mingled with oil, and generally had incense joined with it, which explains the *nexus* of this clause with the following one. **Incense is an abomination unto me.** God had commanded the use of incense in worship, as he had commanded burnt offerings and oblations (Exod. xxx. 1—8, 34—38; Lev. ii. 2; xvi. 12, 13). But incense symbolized prayer (Ps. cxli. 2); and if no heartfelt prayer accompanied its use, it was emptied of all its significance, and became hateful to God—a *mere* form, and consequently an "abomination." **The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with.** The weekly festival of the sabbath, the monthly one of the "new moon," and the annual "assemblies" or "solemn feasts" (2 Chron. viii. 13), were the main occasions of Jewish worship. As at this time conducted, God could endure none of them; all were tainted with the prevalent unreality. The construction of the passage is highly rhetorical, and indicates great excitement of feeling. Kay translates it literally, "New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies, I cannot—it is ungodliness—even the solemn meeting." The authors of the Revised Version also suppose an aposiopesis. **The solemn meeting.** The word thus translated is applied only to particular days in the great festival seasons, as to the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 36; Numb. xxix. 35; Neh. viii. 18), and the seventh day of the Passover (Deut. xvi. 8), or else to days specially appointed for religious services by civil authority (2 Kings x. 20; 2 Chron. vii. 9; Joel i. 14; ii. 15). The meaning thus is, that *even the very highest* occasions of religious worship were abused by the Israelites of the time, and made an offence to God.

Ver. 14.—**Your new moons.** (For the ceremonies to be observed at the opening of each month, see Numb. xxviii. 11—15.) **Your appointed feasts.** The "appointed feasts" are the great festival-times—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. They do not include the sabbath or the "new moon," with which they are, both here and elsewhere (1 Chron. xxiii. 31; 2 Chron. xxxi. 3), contrasted. **They are a trouble unto me**; literally, *an encumbrance* (see Deut. i. 12).

Ver. 15.—**I will hide mine eyes,** etc. A time comes when the wicked are alarmed, and seek to turn to God; **but it is** *too late.*

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. i. 28). **When ye make many prayers**; literally, *multiply prayer*. **Full of blood** (comp. ver. 21). Actual bloodshed may be pointed at, as the murder of Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 21), and the fate which befell Isaiah himself, according to the tradition, would seem to show. But cruelty and oppression, producing poverty and wretchedness, and tending to shorten life, are no doubt also included (comp. Micah iii. 10, 11). These were the special sins of the time (see vers. 17, 23).

Vers. 16—20.—THE REQUIREMENT OF GOD—AMENDMENT OF LIFE. God, having put aside the worthless plea of outward religiousness made by his people, goes on to declare, by the mouth of his prophet, what he requires. First, in general terms (ver. 16), and then with distinct specification (ver. 17), he calls on them to amend their ways, both negatively ("cease to do evil") and positively ("learn to do well"). If they will really amend, then he assures them of forgiveness and favour; if they refuse and continue their rebellion, the sword will devour them.

Ver. 16.—**Wash you, make you clean.** The analogy of sin to defilement, and of washing to cleansing from sin, has been felt among men universally wherever there has been any sense of sin. Outward purification by water has been constantly made use of as typical of the recovery of inward purity. Hence the numerous washings of the Levitical Law (Exod. xxix. 4; Lev. i. 9, 13; Numb. xix. 7, 8, 19; Dent. xxi. 6; xxiii. 11; etc.); hence the ablutions of the priests in Egypt (Herod., ii. 37); hence the appropriateness of the rite of baptism; hence the symbolical washing of hands to free from complicity in blood-guiltiness (Matt. xxvii. 24). "Wash you, make you clean," could not be misunderstood by the Israelites; they would know that it was a requirement to "wash their hands in innocency" (Ps. xxvi. 6; lxxiii. 13), even apart from what follows. **Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.** Not "hide it," for that was impossible; but remove it altogether—in other words, "cease from it." "Cast off all the works of darkness;" get rid of evil, to begin with. So much is negative.

Ver. 17.—**Learn to do well.** Now comes the positive; first, in the general form—"learn," etc.; which resembles the apostle's "Put on the armour of light" (Rom. xiii. 12). Then follow the particulars. **Seek judgment**; or, *seek out justice*; i.e. endeavour to get justice done to all men; **see that they** "have right." **Relieve the oppressed.** So the LXX., the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Chaldean Versions. But the word translated "oppressed" is thought by many to mean "oppressor" (Kimchi, Gesenius, Cheyne). This is certainly its meaning in Ps. lxxi. 4. Translate, *righten the oppressor*; i.e. correct and chasten him. **Judge the fatherless**; rather, *do justice to the orphan* (Cheyne); see that he is not wronged—be his champion. **Plead for the widow**; *i.e.* plead her cause in the courts; or, if judge, and she have no advocate, lean towards her, as if her advocate. The widow and the orphan were taken under God's special protection from the time of Moses, and constantly commended to the tender care of the righteous (Exod. xxii. 22—24; Deut. x. 18; xxiv. 17; xxvii. 19, etc.).

Ver. 18.—**Come now, and let us reason together.** God has from time to time permitted man to reason with him (Gen. xviii. 23—32; Exod. iv. 1—17; Job xxiii. 3—7; Micah vi. 2); but it is difficult to see that there is any "reasoning" or "controversy" here. Mr. Cheyne translates, "Let us bring our dispute to an end." **Though your sins be as scarlet, . . . like crimson**; *i.e.* "open, evident, glaring." Or there may be an allusion to their blood-guiltiness (see vers. 15, 19). **They shall be as white as snow.** Comp. Ps. li. 7, which is completely parallel, whether it was written before or after. There can be no better image of purity than snow (comp. Job ix. 30; Lam. iv. 7). **As wool.** A weaker illustration than the preceding one, but needed for the parallelism. (The resemblance of falling snow to wool is noted in Ps. cxlvii. 16.)

Ver. 19.—**If ye be willing and obedient.** Rosenmüller explains this as equivalent to "if ye be willing to obey" (cf. Ezek. iii. 7); but perhaps it is better to give each verb its separate force: "If you consent in your wills, and are also obedient in your actions" (so Kay). **Ye shall eat the good of the land**; *i.e.* there shall be no invasion; strangers shall not devour your crops (see ver. 7); you shall consume them yourselves. "The good of the land" is a common expression for its produce (Gen. xlv. 18, 20; Ezra ix. 12; Neh. ix. 36; Jer. ii. 7).

Ver. 20.—**If ye refuse and rebel**; *i.e.* "if ye neither consent in will, nor obey in act," antithetical to the two verbs in the first clause of ver. 19. **Ye shall be devoured**; or, *ye shall be eaten*. The same verb as in the latter clause of ver. 19. **With the sword.** The metaphor is not a common one, but occurs in Jeremiah (ii. 30; xii. 12; xlvi. 10, 14) and Nahum (ii. 13). **The mouth of**

the Lord hath spoken it. A weighty ending, indicating the certainty of fulfilment. Jehovah, who cannot lie, has spoken; the result will assuredly follow.

Vers. 21—23.—ISAIAH'S LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM. The exhortation to amendment has been made—the results have been set forth; the temporal reward has been promised; the temporal vengeance, unless they amend, threatened. Time must be allowed the people for the prophet's words to reach them, and do their work upon them, *i.e.* either soften or harden them. Meanwhile, Isaiah reflects on the condition of Jerusalem, and the unlikelihood of its rulers turning to God in consequence of his preaching.

Ver. 21.—**How is the faithful city become an harlot!** Not here an idolatress, but one that has left her first love, and turned to other attractions. Faithful once to her lord her spouse (Cant., *passim*), she has now cast him off—she is an adulterous wife, she no longer obeys or loves her husband. **It was full of judgment; righteousness,** etc. "She that was full" (Revised Version). Under Solomon (1 Kings iii. 9—28) and again under Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xix. 5—11). It is not clear when the systematic perversion of justice by the rulers began. Perhaps it originated in the latter part of Uzziah's reign, when the royal authority was weakened by being divided between Uzziah and Jotham (2 Chron. xxvi. 21). **But now murderers** (see the last note on ver. 15).

Ver. 22.—**Thy silver is become dross.** Primarily, "thy great men have deteriorated." From pure silver, they have become mere dross, the vile refuse of the smelted ore, only fit to be cast away as worthless. But perhaps there is some further reference to *all* that was once precious in Jerusalem; there had been a general deterioration—all the silver was now a debased metal of no value. **Thy wine mixed with water.** A parallelism; but (as so often happens) a weakened iteration of the preceding sentiment.

Ver. 23.—**Thy princes are rebellious;** *i.e.* "rebels against their true King, Jehovah." **Companions of thieves.** Leagued with those who are engaged in filching away the inheritance of the widow and the orphan by chicane in the law courts (see above, vers. 15—17; and compare the Homiletics on vers. 16—20). **Gifts . . . rewards;** *i.e.* "bribes," given and taken on the condition of their perverting justice (comp. Jer. xxii. 17; Ezek. xxii. 12; Micah iii. 11; vii. 3). **They judge not the fatherless,** etc. They dismiss the orphan's complaint without hearing it, and are so noted for perversion of justice that the widow does not even bring her cause before them.

Vers. 24—31.—THE DECLARATION OF GOD'S JUDGMENT. It is foreknown to God that Israel will not repent. He therefore fulminates his judgment; which, however, is still conditional, so far as individuals are concerned. His vengeance will fall upon the land; but the result will be twofold. Destruction will come upon the unrighteous and the sinners (ver. 28)—they will be "consumed" (ver. 28), and "confounded" (ver. 29); but there will be some on whom the punishment will have a purifying power, whose dross it will purge away, and whom it will convert to God (vers. 25, 27). From these will rise up a new Jerusalem—a "city of righteousness," a "faithful stronghold" (ver. 26).

Ver. 24.—**The Lord, the Lord of hosts.** In the original, *Ha-Adôn, Jehovah Sabaoth*—i.e. "The Lord" (or "Master" of men and angels), "the Self-Existing One of the hosts of heaven"—*i.e.* their God, the only proper object of their worship. It gives peculiar weight and significance to this prophecy, that it is introduced by a triple designation of the Divine Being. **The Mighty One of Israel.** A very unusual designation, only found here and, with the modification of "Jacob" for "Israel," in the following places: ch. xlix. 26; lx. 16; Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. cxxxii. 2, 5. God's might would be shown alike in his vengeance on his enemies, and in his purification of a remnant to serve him. **I will ease me of mine adversaries;** literally, *I will comfort me;* i.e. I will rid myself of them, and so obtain the only comfort that they will allow me to receive from them (comp. Ezek. v. 13, "I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted").

Ver. 25.—**I will turn my hand upon thee;** rather, *I will bring back my hand upon thee;* i.e. I will once more put forth the "strong hand and mighty arm," with which I brought thee out of Egypt (Ps. cxxxvi. 12), and will work another deliverance—the deliverance of Israel out of captivity. **Purely purge away thy dross;** literally, *will purge away thy dross like borax,* which was used as a flux in purifying the metal. The prophet continues the metaphor of ver. 22. **And take away all thy tin;** rather, *thy lead*—the alloy with which the "silver" had become mixed.

Ver. 26.—**I will restore thy judges as at the first** (see Exod. xix. 25, 26). In the early times there was no bribery, no perversion of justice (Jer. ii. 2, 3). God will bring back a time when the nation will renew its first love, and be as it was in the days of Moses and Joshua. **Thy counsellors** (comp. 2 Sam. xv. 12; 1 Chron. xxvi. 14; xxvii. 32, 33,

etc.). **The city of righteousness**; or, *of justice*. The prophecy may have been fulfilled in part by the earthly Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and the Maccabees, but is mainly fulfilled in the heavenly Jerusalem—the Church of God, the true Israel. **The faithful city** (comp. ver. 21). Certainly, the post-Captivity Church was "faithful" to Jehovah, in the way of acknowledging him, and him only, to be God, to a very remarkable degree, and in strong contrast to its inclination during pre-Captivity times.

Ver. 27.—**Redeemed with judgment**; rather, *delivered through judgment*; i.e. God's judgment shall have the effect of "delivering" a remnant, who shall build up Zion once more, and dwell in it. **Her converts**; *i.e.* those of her children who turn to God, shall be delivered through God's righteousness, *i.e.* through the righteous vengeance which he executes upon the unfaithful nation. Some, however, understand both clauses to mean that the penitent remnant shall "deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (comp. Ezek. xiv. 14, 20; xviii. 27, etc.).

Ver. 28.—**Transgressors . . . sinners . . . they that forsake the Lord** (comp. vers. 2 and 4). These are scarcely distinct classes—rather different names for the ungodly. All of them, by whatever name they were called, would perish "together."

Ver. 29.—**The oaks which ye have desired** are, primarily, the "green trees" under which images were set up (2 Kings xvii. 10), but perhaps represent also any worldly attractions which draw the soul away from God—as wealth, or power, or honours. **In the day of suffering, sinners are ashamed of having been led away by such poor temptations as those to which they have yielded** (comp. Rom. vi. 21, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"). **The gardens.** Kay suggests "idolatrous pleasure-gardens as those at Daphné, near Antioch," which is a reasonable exegesis. Such were probably to be found wherever Astarté, or the "Dea Syra," was worshipped.

Ver. 30.—**Ye shall be as an oak**, etc. Contrast the case of the godly, whose "leaf shall not wither" (Ps. i. 3).

Ver. 31.—**The strong** (literally, *the strong one*) **shall be as tow**; *i.e.* weak and powerless (comp. Judg. xvi. 9), utterly unable to resist the Divine fiat when it goes forth. **The maker of it.** An extraordinary mistranslation, since *po'al* never means anything but "work." His own acts would light the fire by which the "strong one" would be consumed and perish.

> "Nec lex justior ulla est,
> Quam necis artifices arte perire sua."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—"*The vision of Isaiah which he saw.*" The modern theory, that the prophetical gift was a mere "presentiment," or "insight," closely akin to that by which clear-sighted men of all times and nations have been able, in many respects, to forecast the coming course of events, is not very easily reconcilable with these words, "the *vision* of Isaiah which he *saw*." As a commentator whose freedom from the shackles of tradition is beyond dispute observes, "With Isaiah, it" (*i.e.* prophecy) "is not a mere presentiment; it is a calm and settled conviction, based on a direct revelation, and confirmed by a deep insight into the laws of the Divine government" (Cheyne, 'Prophecies of Isaiah,' vol. i. p. 233, note). Isaiah "sees" that which he announces. It is placed distinctly before him, as that which is about to be. He no more doubts it than he doubts that which is presented to his bodily vision. Hence it may be concluded—

I. That the prophetic inspiration was absolutely convincing to those who were favoured with it, and precluded all feeling of doubt.

II. That it was wholly different in kind from that power of prevision which all men more or less possess, resting, not upon grounds of reason or experience, but upon an inward spiritual conviction that the substance of the prophetic announcement had been communicated to the prophet by God.

Vers. 2, 3.—*God's arraignment of his people.* God claims his people's willing obedience on three grounds. 1. They are his children. 2. He has made them great. 3. He has exalted them to eminence among the nations.

I. AS HIS CHILDREN, they are bound to love and serve him, to be grateful to him for his manifold mercies, and to yield him entire obedience. He is the Author of their being; he sustains their life; he feeds them, supports them, gives them every blessing which they enjoy. In return, what less can they do than love him unfeignedly, serve him truly, and obey him implicitly? Earthly children are bound to act thus

towards their earthly parents: how much more God's children towards their heavenly Father!

II. AS RAISED BY HIM TO POWER AND GREATNESS, they are yet more bound to serve him. Every gift of God to us increases our responsibilities, lays us under a more stringent obligation to make a due return to our Benefactor. Israel was increased from a family into a nation, was multiplied in numbers, given a land flowing with milk and honey, raised from the bondage of Egypt to an independent and commanding position. Each step in their progress constituted a demand on them for greater love, profounder gratitude, more exact observance of every Divine commandment.

III. AS EXALTED AMONG THE NATIONS, they are at once called upon for additional thankfulness, and required to manifest to the heathen that God's favour has not been bestowed on them by mere caprice, but with some reference to their capacity of profiting by it. "A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14). Eminence of whatever kind calls upon us for increased exertion. *Noblesse oblige.* If men are bound to serve God in the lowest walks of life, still more are they bound to serve him when he has "raised them out of the dust, and lifted them out of the dunghill, that he may set them with princes, even with the princes of his people" (Ps. cxiii. 7, 8). And as with individuals, so with nations. Eminence among the powers of the earth calls on them to set a good example—to "let their light shine before men," to make a decided profession of religion, and to carry out their profession in their acts.

Israel, however, had acknowledged none of these obligations. They had "rebelled against God," turned away from following him, cast his words behind their back. More dull than either ox or ass, they had refused to "know God," to have him in their thoughts, to "consider his operations" (ch. v. 10). Have not multitudes of Christians also followed their example? They too are God's children (Rom. viii. 16; 1 John iii. 1, etc.), created by him, regenerated by him, adopted by him in his beloved Son, Jesus Christ. They too have been raised by him to greatness, increased from a "little flock" to hundreds of millions, "carried on eagles' wings" (Exod. xix. 4), borne safely through the storms of centuries. And they have been exalted among the nations of the earth, given the chief place, manifestly elevated above both Jews and heathen. Must not Christians, if they rebel, if they refuse to "know God" or "consider" him, expect the same terrible punishments as overtook the Israelites, or others similar to them? "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 26, 27). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31).

Vers. 4—9.—*The prophet's enforcement of God's charge.* God's words are so weighty, that they may well be few; the preacher's enforcement of them must needs be, comparatively speaking, lengthy. Isaiah, in addressing his erring countrymen, aimed at producing in them—

I. CONVICTION OF SIN. For this purpose, he begins with an array of seven charges (ver. 4), varying, as it were, the counts of the indictment: (1) they are a sinful nation; (2) they are laden with guilt; (3) they are a race of evil-doers; (4) they are children that act corruptly; (5) they have forsaken Jehovah; (6) they have scorned him; (7) they have estranged themselves from him, and, as it were, turned away from him and gone backward. The first four are general, and seem to be little more than rhetorical variations of one and the same theme. We may learn from them that rhetorical variation is allowable, nay, proper, since different words catch hold of different persons, rouse them, touch them to the quick, are effectual to the producing of repentance. The last three charges are particular, and to some extent different, each exceeding the last in heinousness, and thus rising in the way of climax—desertion, insult, complete estrangement. Metaphor is then called in to work on the imagination, and through the imagination on the conscience: the nation is depicted as a diseased and stricken body, a mass of sores and corruption (vers. 5, 6).

II. FEAR OF PUNISHMENT. Undoubtedly fear is a low motive in religion—some think it altogether an unworthy one. But while human nature remains such as it is, while the mass of men are incapable of being stirred by the higher motives, appeal must be made to the lower ones. The prophet, therefore, reminds his people of God's judgments

in the past (ver. 7), threatens them with further judgments in the future (ver. 5), and ends the paragraph by suggesting that his people have barely escaped the most terrible of all judgments—a destruction like that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vers. 11—14.—*The outward form of religion, without inward piety, an offence to God.* It is strange how deeply ingrained the idea is in man, that formal acts of worship, outward acknowledgment, ritual, ceremonial, pageantry, constitute religion, and will be accepted by God in lieu of the inward devotion of the heart. Heathenism was full of the notion. Plato tells us that the Greeks thought they might commit any number and any kind of sins or crimes, and obtain pardon for them at the hands of the gods, if they offered sufficient sacrifices (Plato, 'Rep.,' ii. § 7). It is evident that the Jews of Isaiah's time were possessed with a similar idea. They "tried to compensate for their unrighteous lives by sumptuous—perhaps extravagant—performance of ceremonial observances" (Kay). So did the Pharisees of our Lord's day. "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith." "Ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer" (Matt. xxiii. 23, 14). And do not professed Christians too often do the same? Is not "saying prayers" too often made a substitute for private devotion, and "going to church" for the true public worship of God? Nay, is not attendance at the Holy Eucharist itself sometimes allowed to become a mere form? Alas! Isaiah's warning voice is needed as much by Christians as by Jews. He tells us that the outward form of religion, without inward piety, is not only not pleasing to God, but is an offence unto him. It is so—

I. AS IMPLYING A LOW AND UNWORTHY CONCEPTION OF GOD. To imagine that God will be content with external observance is to suppose, either that he is unable to read our hearts or that he does not care how we are in our hearts disposed towards him. It is thus either to question his omniscience or to deny his moral nature. A good father does care whether his sons render him a mere formal obedience or are heartily bent on obeying him through love and gratitude. Only one unworthy of the name is careless upon the point, and content so long as that which he commands is done.

II. AS A SPECIES OF HYPOCRISY. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites!*" was our Lord's denunciation of those who paid tithe of every minutest vegetable, yet were without mercy and faith (Matt. xxiii. 23). The outward acts of religion—prayer, praise, observance of fast and festival, attendance at sacraments, and the like—constitute a profession of certain inward feelings—love, gratitude, faith, reverence—and, if these are absent, the performance of the acts is deceptive and hypocritical. It is to make a pretence that we are what we are not. It is bad enough if it is done to deceive men; but it is worse if we think thereby to hoodwink God. God hates hypocrisy, and is revolted by the conduct of such as "honour him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him."

III. AS A DESECRATION OF THINGS SACRED. The observances of religion have something sacred about them. They are either suggested by nature or formally ordained by God for a holy use; and, if practised in an irreligious, or even in a non-religious, spirit, they are desecrated. It is a mockery to bend the knee and repeat the words of formularies while our thoughts are straying to other matters, as business, amusements, gaieties—it is emptying things holy of their holiness, and bringing them down to a lower level. We injure ourselves by so doing, we scandalize the truly religious, we give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. Better not to "tread God's courts" at all than to do so without a reverent and prayerful spirit.

Ver. 15.—*God will not listen to the prayers of the wicked.* Sinners sometimes think that they may persist in sin as long as they like, because they can at any time turn to God, ask his forgiveness, obtain pardon, and be saved. But Scripture is very full of warnings that this is not the case. There is "a sin against the Holy Ghost," which "shall not be forgiven to men, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 32). There is a persistence in sin, which "quenches the Spirit" (1 Thess. v. 17). Men cannot turn to God whenever they please. The "accepted time" passes away, and they find it impossible to turn to him in true faith and penitence. They may "say prayers," but they do not really pray. And God shuts his ears against such prayers

(see, besides the present passage, Job xxvii. 8, 9; Prov. i. 28; Jer. xi. 11; Ezek. viii. 18; Heb. vi. 4—6; x. 26—29; 1 John v. 16).

Vers. 16—20.—*No return to God's favour without amendment of life.* The outward show of religion, which the Israelites maintained, vain and futile as it was, seemed to indicate that they were not wholly irreclaimable—they did not desire to break altogether with God. The prophet, therefore, assumes that they would wish to know the way by which they may remove God's anger, and enter once more into favour with him; and he proceeds to point out that the one and only road open to them is to amend their ways—to reverse their course of life. This amendment consists in two things: one negative, the other positive.

I. NEGATIVELY: AMENDMENT CONSISTS IN CEASING TO DO EVIL. This is the first thing needed. Men must break off their sins, put away the iniquity of their doings, resolutely determine that the works of darkness shall be done by them no more. The works will be different in different cases. To one man they will be impure acts and words; to another, falsehood, deception, equivocation; to another, profanity of speech; to another, drunkenness; to another, intemperate anger, and so on. To the Israelites at this time, or at any rate to their chief men, who are here specially addressed (ver. 10), the evil-doing most common, and to which they were most prone, was cruelty and oppression. The chief men acted as judges, held courts, heard complaints, determined causes; but, instead of seeking to do justice between man and man, they sought merely to advance their own interests by means of the office entrusted to them. They accepted bribes from rich suitors to determine law-suits in their favour; they leaned in their judgments against the weak and the defenceless. They were probably a clique, who enriched themselves by playing into each others' hands, and ousting weak persons from their properties and estates by legal artifices. All this whole system of evil-doing they were required, first of all, to put aside, before they could hope that God would look upon them with anything but anger and reprobation.

II. POSITIVELY: AMENDMENT CONSISTS IN LEARNING TO DO WELL. Negative goodness is not enough. God expects each man to glorify him by good actions. Those who have gone astray must not only retrace their steps, but must enter resolutely on the path of virtue. They must "set themselves in some good way." And this must be especially done *in the matters wherein they have failed.* The Jewish judges had failed in their task of administering justice—they had given unjust sentences, favoured oppressors, dealt hardly with the widow and the orphan. Hence the prophet's exhortations to them are "Seek out justice; correct the oppressor; right the orphan; plead the cause of the widow" (ver. 17). And so it must be with all the varieties of evil-doers. Each must be exhorted to the virtue which is the opposite of the vice that he has indulged in. Each must labour, if he really seeks restoration to God's favour, to do deeds the very opposite of those which he did formerly. If he was a drunkard, he does well to become a total abstainer; if a glutton, to chasten his flesh by fasting; if impure, to give himself to the reclaiming of outcasts; if niggardly, "to sell all that he has and give to the poor;" if violent, to suffer wrong, and turn his cheek to the smiter.

From the nature of amendment, the prophet proceeds to its consequences, which are likewise twofold, consisting in—

I. THE CLEANSING OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL. Here much is kept back which is revealed later, as (1) the mode whereby the soul is cleansed, or in other words, the doctrine of the atonement, which appears in ch. liii. 5, 6; (2) the necessity of laying hold of the atonement by faith (Rom. iii. 25; iv. 5, etc.); and (3) the immediate removal of the guilt of sin, when God justifies us, and the gradual removal of its taint, as he sanctifies us. But the declaration of the fact of our cleansing is directly made, and made with the utmost plainness: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," etc. The cleansing will be entire, complete, thorough. Snow will not be purer than the redeemed soul, which "the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed from *all* sin" (1 John i. 7).

II. A REWARD, EXTERNAL TO THE SOUL ITSELF, WHICH GOD'S FREE GRACE WILL BESTOW. Here still more is kept back. The reward held out is merely temporal: "Ye shall eat the good of the land." Ye shall live in peace and prosperity, under your own vines and fig trees, and enjoy the fruits of the earth, which God in his bounty gives you.

Not a whisper of the eternal reward—the blessedness reserved for man in heaven, the bliss which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Probably the Israelites of Isaiah's day were too gross and sensual, too much wrapt up in material things, to have been stirred to action by anything so distant and intangible as the heavenly life, even if they could have formed the faintest conception of it. Here, again, "God has provided better things for us" (Heb. x. 40), and given us a motive for exertion far beyond any that was presented to his ancient people.

Vers. 21—23.—*The grievousness of the sin of oppression in God's sight.* The Israelites of Isaiah's time were guilty of many heinous sins, as we see by later chapters. They were idolaters (ch. ii. 8), haughty (ch. ii. 11, 17), wanton (ch. iii. 16), covetous (ch. v. 8), drunken (ch. v. 11), perverse (ch. v. 20), vain (ch. v. 21). But of all their sins, none seems to have so much offended God as their oppression of the poor and weak. The prophet refers to it over and over again (ch. i. 15, 21, 23; iii. 5, 12, 14, 15; v. 7, 23, etc.). He denounces it in the strongest terms (ch. i. 15, 23). He represents it as an especial offence to Jehovah (ch. iii. 15; v. 7). The reasons would seem to be—

I. BECAUSE OPPRESSION IS A BREACH OF TRUST. To oppress another we must have authority over him, and all authority is committed to man by God, *as a trust.* "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). God entrusts us with power over others for their benefit and for our own moral training. He puts us in his place, to act for him, to be his instruments: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Prov. viii. 15). Abuse of our position is breach of trust; it is to use the power God has committed to us for a purpose the very opposite to that which he intended. It is flagrant rebellion against him.

II. BECAUSE IT IS CRUEL AND INHUMAN.

> "'Tis excellent to have a giant's strength,
> But tyrannous to use it like a giant."

Weakness naturally makes an appeal to our emotions of pity and compassion. To injure the defenceless, to hurt, crush, ruin the poor and the weak, instead of being their champion, is to be wanting altogether in manhood. It is to be at once unjust and cowardly. Oppressors have always been the objects of general hatred and condemnation. Rameses II., Nebuchadnezzar, Tarquin, Nero, Bajazet, have left an evil memory behind them, which will continue while the world endures. Oppressors are of various kinds. Some are emperors or kings, some princes, some judges, and other public personages. But there is far more oppression in private life than in public. Slave-owners, and still more, slave-drivers, are apt to be fearful oppressors, making the lives of hundreds a burden to them. Even employers of free labour are often oppressors, when they take advantage of competition to beat down wages below the rate at which life can be sustained in decent comfort. Masters often act oppressively towards their servants, heads of schools towards their pupils, even parents towards their children. Of all the evils "done under the sun," there is none more widespread than oppression (Eccles. iv. 1), and none more hateful.

III. BECAUSE IT OUTRAGES GOD'S ATTRIBUTE OF JUSTICE. To be just is of the very essence of God's nature. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. xviii. 25). Exact justice is what he deals out even to the feeblest, the weakest, the most contemptible of his creatures. And he "has made man upright" (Eccles. vii. 29). He has implanted in man a sense of justice, the reflex of his own attribute, and made him to be self-condemned if he transgresses it. God's law of conduct, "Do unto others as thou wouldst have them do to thee," is a law of strict, equal justice, and if carried out would put an end to all oppression and wrong. Thus, when men oppress their fellow-men, they disobey both God's inward and his outward law; nay, more, they outrage him by showing contempt for one of his highest attributes.

Ver. 25.—*The purifying power of punishment.* Great national judgments, such as that which Isaiah was sent to announce, have a purifying effect in three ways.

I. THEY ALARM A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PERSONS, AND INDUCE THEM TO QUIT THEIR SINS. The careless and indifferent have their attention excited and their fears

aroused by the dangers which manifestly threaten all, and the calamities which naturally fall on some. The class of waverers, who would fain be on the side of good, but continually fall away when temptation assails them, find their power of resistance strengthened by the perils of the time, which render sinful enjoyment insecure, and bring home to them the certainty that there is retribution in store for sin. Even among pronounced and habitual sinners there are apt to be some whom the novel circumstances of the time startle and induce to "consider their ways." It is an undeniable fact, that of such penitents a certain proportion repent with extreme earnestness, and become examples to the flock, advancing with the same impulse and fervour in the way of godliness as they formerly advanced in the "way which leadeth to destruction" (Matt. vii. 13).

II. THEY INCREASE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE BETTER DISPOSED, AND RENDER THEM MORE CIRCUMSPECT AND STRICT IN THEIR CONDUCT. Men are aware, under ordinary circumstances, that they may at any moment be summoned to meet their Judge. But they do not commonly realize the possibility. It is one of the effects of great national judgments—war, pestilence, famine—that they force on men the consideration of the peril in which they stand, and compel them to contemplate death as near, and their own speedy demise as probable. They lead men's thoughts to existence beyond the grave, and encourage them to prepare for the great change which death will make in their condition. They break in upon the placid calm of everyday life, which laps so many souls in an elysium of unconsciousness, and remind men of their Lord's solemn injunction to them: "Watch" (Mark xiii. 37).

III. THEY GIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EXERCISE OF THE HEROIC VIRTUES, AND HAVE THUS AN ELEVATING AND PURIFYING INFLUENCE ON THE BEST MEN. There is more room for self-devotion in times of national calamity than under any other circumstances. Thousands are thrown upon the charity of their neighbours. The suffering which exists is at once *quasi*-universal and extreme. Much danger has to be encountered in its relief. The best men at such times give themselves up wholly to the task of alleviating their neighbours' woes. Singly, or in bands, they go forth, fling themselves into the thick of the struggle, and do their best to relieve the general distress and misery. Whether they succeed or whether they fail in their object of helping others, they do not, cannot fail in one thing—the improvement of their own characters. Their "dross" is certain to be "purged away" by their unselfish efforts, and the pure metal of their virtue to shine forth ever more and more, as time goes on, free from all alloy of pride, or vanity, or self-seeking. Affliction has also a purifying effect on the individual. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," etc. Thus only can "patience have her perfect work" (Jas. i. 4). Thus only can faith be tried (1 Pet. i. 7) and strengthened. Thus only can "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10) be known and realized. But this branch of the subject lies outside of Isaiah's teaching in the present chapter.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Jehovah arraigns his people.* I. INGRATITUDE THE BASEST OF SINS. He, the Father, has been faithlessly forsaken by ungrateful sons. This is the worst form of ingratitude.

> "Filial ingratitude!
> Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
> For lifting food to 't?"
>
> ('King Lear.')

It has been said that

> "The wretch whom gratitude once fails to bind,
> To truth or honour let him lay no claim,
> But stand confess'd *the brute disguised in man.*"

But the brutes *are* grateful; while Jehovah's sons seem to have neither memory nor understanding. Man, by his nature, if he does not rise above, must sink below, the level of the beast. There is nothing more hateful, then, because more radically amiss and evil, than ingratitude. It is, great men have said, the sum of guilt and evil, worse than any taint of the blood, more odious than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness.

II. THE PEOPLE HAVE ADDED REBELLION TO INGRATITUDE. They have forsaken, reviled, "gone backward" from him. This is a climax of sin. Our passions are ever in movement; there is no stagnation. Insensibility to God's goodness soon leads to antipathy, antipathy to active hatred, and this to open revolt. "Be ye thankful." The neglect of the heart and its proper attitude to God is certain to lay us open to every sin. The greatest physical pests of the city, and not less its moral corruptions, may be traced to neglect. Some "covenant" of God made known to us in natural or in spiritual law has been broken; hence sin and sorrow, and hence alone, as the prophets ever teach.

III. HEAVEN AND EARTH WITNESSES OF MAN'S GUILT. The whole language and style call up to mind the court of justice. All human events form part of a drama, of which God and the angels are spectators. We in all our thoughts and deeds are surrounded by a great cloud of spectators. The great solid mountains, for example, seem the very symbols of those fixed laws by which our actions must be judged. Napoleon in Egypt called his soldiers to reflect that "forty centuries were looking down upon them from the pyramids." By a similar figure, Micah summons the people to trial in the presence of the mountains (vi. 2); the Deuteronomist appeals to heaven and earth to listen to his words (xxxii. 1). So does a psalmist (Ps. l.) represent Jehovah as demanding the attention of earth from east to west. All our acts run out into a universal significance.

IV. THE EXTREMITY OF NATIONAL RUIN. The people have run the whole course of sin, have left no stone unturned in the attempt to defeat Jehovah; and lo! the result. The body corporate is one mass of disease and wounds, fresh and bleeding. The land is devastated and fire-scarred. Barbarians are devouring it; it reminds of awful Sodom's ruin. Jerusalem, indeed, is as yet unscathed; but she stands alone in the midst of the dread silence. Like "a booth in the vineyard, a hammock in a cucumber-field," is she! Thus, when appeals to the ear have been repeatedly neglected, God paints the truth upon the field of vision. If we heed not the voice, we must feel the weight of the hand, of the Lord. Yet there is still a spark of hope. Jerusalem is *all but*, yet not quite, a Sodom or Gomorrah. There is still a remnant of people left. Thank God, while there is life there is hope. At the very moment when we are tempted to say of the ruined nation, the broken life, "All is lost!" a voice is heard, "All may yet be restored!"—J.

Vers. 10—17.—*The people's plea considered.* The leading men of Jerusalem are supposed to reply to the charge of Jehovah, pointing to the elaborate manner in which his worship is kept up. And Jehovah rejects their plea with scorn.

I. THE DIVINE INDIGNATION AGAINST WICKEDNESS. No more scathing denunciation could there be than to term the rulers of the holy city "chiefs of Sodom," and the people in general "people of Gomorrah." Those were names of horror and shame. Christ used them in the same manner of extreme denunciation. Three forms of sin were prevalent—luxury, violence, and oppression. The widow and the orphan stand out especially as victims of greed and hard-hearted, grasping selfishness. As nothing could be more humane and gentle than the spirit of the Law, so nothing could be more wicked than the disregard of it. The Talmud, no less than the prophets, said the strongest things against injustice. The judge is particularly cautioned not to be biassed in *favour of the poor against the rich.* What a light does this throw upon the fine education of the conscience! How much more flagrant the opposite fault! "He who unjustly hands over one man's goods to another, he shall pay God for it with his own soul. In the hour when the judge sits in judgment over his fellow-man, he shall feel as it were a sword pointed at his own heart." So says the Talmud. Jerusalem had evidently, in the earlier time of Isaiah, been obscuring its highest conscience.

II. DIVINE CONTEMPT FOR SACRIFICES AND RITUAL. 1. These things were never beautiful nor acceptable unless as *expressions of piety.* If the piety were not existent, the streams of blood, the reek of incense, became a spiritual disgust. The beasts chosen for sacrifice were from the meeker and pursued animals: how horrible a lie for the persecutor and the proud to bring such symbols to God! Says the Talmud, "Look at Scripture: there is not a single bird more persecuted than the dove; yet God has chosen her to be offered up on his altar. The bull is hunted by the lion, the sheep by

the wolf, the goat by the tiger. And God said, 'Bring me a sacrifice, not from them that persecute, but from them that are persecuted.'" 2. Mere attendance on public worship is *not acceptable.* Who has required them, Jehovah asks, to "wear out" his courts? Their thronging and their noise is offensive to him. Their meat offerings are vanity; meaning nothing spiritual, they have no value whatever. The incense itself, the finest flavour and aroma of the offering, stinks as it were in the nostrils of God. New moon and sabbath, and all the innumerable solemnities,—they are hateful and burdensome to Jehovah. He cannot endure the contradiction—wickedness and worship. Quantity goes for nothing, quality is everything in the service of God. There is only one act of true worship, but it fills a lifetime. Repetitions of unmeaning acts harden the heart, dull the perceptions, accumulate guilt. Homer spoke of the crimes of men "going up to the iron heaven." So here the heaven is like an iron bound, not suffering the prayers of the wicked to pass through.

III. THE TRUE DIVINE SERVICE. 1. *It consists in moral, as distinguished from ritual acts.* In making the "inside of the cup and platter clean. It is a "washing" of the soul from those thoughts and passions which lead to sin. It is a giving of one's self up to the godly sorrow that works repentance. "When the gates of prayer in heaven are shut, that of tears is open," says the Talmud. What more blessed than the tears of the sinner over his sin? The rainbow of hope never fails to overarch them. 2. *It has a negative side.* Self must be denied in every evil meaning that self bears. The evil lusts and habits in the embrace of which we have been locked, must now be held at arm's length, and a divorce *a mensâ et toro* be effected. Every true learning must be preceded by an unlearning; there must be a pause and a turning of the whole person, in short, a *conversion,* before we can start on a new course. God's voice says to us, "Hold! Leave off!" as often as it says, "Go forward!" Habits form unconsciously. It is, perhaps, a question more important to ask, because easier to be answered and dealt with—Are we doing anything to break off bad habits? It is God's part to weave and form the good in us. We should make space and room for him to operate in our souls. 3. *It has a positive side.* We are to learn—to inquire, to seek, in order to act rightly. Thought is the soul of act. We learn to do well by looking to good examples. The "consideration" of Christ is the life-business and art of the Christian. "Why do I tell you incessantly to study the old masters?" asked a great painter of his pupils. "Because the great masters are nearest to nature" (Ingres). So Christ is nearest to God, to the nature and soul of all goodness. "Learn of me!" Nor can we approximate to right living without much seeking, much thought, comparison of experiences, much earnest prayer. "Show me thy ways, teach me thy paths!" Note the stress laid upon justice. This is the basis of character. Love is a vague sentiment without it, and may work as much harm as good. Love strengthened and purified by justice.—this is the ideal of the good man's character. It is the imitation of God. And to seek to resemble the revealed Divine in temper and in life,—this is the essence of worship, the heart of piety.—J.

Vers. 18—23.—*Argument and conviction.* I. THE TRIAL OF THE CASE. 1. *God is reason, otherwise he could not be God of justice.* And if the nature can defend itself, clear itself from guilt, its plea will be allowed. Just so in ch. xliii. 19, the imagery of a court of justice is presented: "Let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified, and let them hear, and say, It is true." The question is—Can the nation clear itself from the charges alleged against it? If so, the deep fixed stain that now seems to rest upon them shall be taken away, and they shall be white as driven snow or as undyed wool. 2. *God appeals to fixed principles of right.* These have long been known, are written in the conscience of the people. A willing spirit of obedience to Divine law is assured of blessing; rebellion brings about hostility, invasion, and all those calamities from which the people are now suffering. Have these curses come "causeless" upon the people? Or are they the just consequences of disobedience? Let them answer. A long pause and silence convey the admission of guilt. They have *no* argument to urge, no cause to show why judgment should be stayed.

II. THE PROPHET'S LAMENTATION. He, as daysman, or go-between, mourns over the city thus convicted, unable to stand in judgment against Jehovah. He is compelled in this cause to turn witness against his own people. Once loyal and pledged as in the

covenant of marriage to Jehovah, the city has become like her who "forsakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God." Where once the splendid seat of justice and purity stood, there is now lawless bloodshed. The pure metal of her virtue has been debased; and "as water unto wine" is her moral feebleness now as contrasted with her moral strength then. They who, as rulers, were set for an example of obedience to God, integrity among men, are rebels and thieves' comrades. Instead of withholding their hands from bribes, they greedily clutch after them. Pity and mercy are extinct; the orphan and the widow are thrust aside. The guilt of guilt lies in the use of power without love. Christ, as the impersonation of humanity and of love, points out that the condemnation of evil conduct lies in this, that love is wanting. The splendid temple ritual was naught, because there was no love in it, as their conduct out of the temple so clearly showed. We may never miss a Sunday service or a celebration of the communion, yet for all that be undone. And many who have never been "professed" Christians will be, on other grounds, professed by Christ.—J.

Vers. 24—31.—*Sentence passed.* I. THE JUDGE. He is "Jehovah of hosts, the Strong One of Israel." He saith, "By the strength of my hand I have done it" (ch. x. 13). He has power to carry out his sentences. The holy fire of his indignation breaks forth like a volcanic flood. From one point of view evil men must be conceived as the enemies of God, and their punishment as his vengeance. If *alone* dwelt upon, such a representation becomes false, because it ignores the aspect of Divine love, which converts this holy vengeance into a *remedial* process. Human vengeance would extinguish the sinner and the sin in one act; Divine vengeance would save the sinner by extinguishing the sin.

II. THE PURPOSE OF JUDGMENT. 1. It is *separation.* The dross and the lead are to be detached from the silver. Human nature is a mixture. There are two extremes to be avoided in thinking of it—one that it is all evil, the other that it is all pure. Pessimism enervates, and optimism hoodwinks us. The Bible always takes the middle view. Things are bad enough with us, but they might be worse. We are sunk low enough, but cannot sink out of sight of our spiritual end, nor beyond the redeeming power of God. The separation of the gross and base element from the spiritual in men involves a *fiery* process. This fire is always burning in the heart of mankind, sometimes breaking out into flame and fume of war or pestilence, to remind of its presence. God has in constant operation his purgatory for souls. It is this truth which only can reconcile us to the presence of suffering. As mere pain it seems intolerable; as the means to the removal of evil it is blessed. 2. It is *restoration.* The better or golden age is ever ready to begin; good judges and rulers will again be given to the city, and it will deserve the title of Righteous and Faithful once more. When we see clearly the abuses that exist, and the necessity of fiery suffering for the renewal of purity, we have grasped a hope that cannot fail. God is ever remaking and recasting life. Not a day passes but some rust gathers, some disintegration of solid structure takes place. It may appear in any and every day that society is becoming hopelessly choked in its vices; or that we ourselves are slipping down into moral ruin. Yet in a happier morning mood it seems that all is mending with ourselves and the world. God's holiness is the vital sap of human life, and when we die to hope of ourselves, we live anew in him. Conversion, if real, will take place, not once, but many times in a life. The heliotrope turns every morning by a fresh effort to the sun. The result of many such personal acts is seen now and again in times of religious revival, when the multitude turns as one man, saying, "Let us walk in the light of Jehovah!"

III. THE PERDITION OF THE OBSTINATE. One will may defeat the remedial purposes of God. If man says, "I *will* be joined to my idols and my sins," no fire, no earthquake has power to dislodge him. If we will not relax our hold on the evil object, we must share its fate. To fix our affections on objects unworthy of our choice is to bring on ourselves shame and self-contempt. The terebinth trees and the pleasant gardens, the seats of ancient idolatry, are typical of all scenes of spurious enjoyment. The voluptuary, the mammon-worshipper, the votary of ambition, create around them a world of objects, fascinating, but unreal. The terebinth shall wither; the garden, parched for want of water, shall lose all its charm. The man who seemed but now the very type of force, shall feel himself slack as tow, and his life-work the spark that sets it on fire.

So both shall irretrievably be consumed. What are the "terebinth trees and pleasant gardens" of our idolatry? Each man's soul must answer. Any and every pleasure is good under right conditions; pernicious else. Everything that is naturally precious to the human heart should be precious to each one of us. In the soul lies the only test. In the way that objects react upon our finest feeling we know whether they are objects for our personal pursuit or no: idols that must degrade us to their level, or symbols and sacraments of God. It is in the life of imagination and association that we differ. Any scene supposed to be holy may become an idolatrous pleasure-garden to the ill-ordered fancy; and the soul that lives in God, seeking ever the true amidst the false, will ever convert the terebinth tree of ill repute into an altar of pure religion. The world is to us what our will permits it to seem. Wedded to the sensual, we must perish from the spiritual; united to the spiritual, the sensual becomes transformed and acquires new associations.—J.

Ver. 4.—"*Children that are corrupters.*" Here we have a broad light on the mission of Isaiah the prophet. The holy nation had become evil. Plants are more poison-spreading in their corruption than forest trees. It is an old proverb, "The corruption of the best is the worst." "*Children* that are corrupt." How solemn the *emphasis* of the prophet's adjuration! "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and *they* have rebelled against me."

I. THE MEASURE OF LIFE IS THE MEASURE OF CORRUPTION. Even physically it is so. The *horse* does not breed such corruption as man. The body, God's most perfect work, must in its corpse state be buried quickly. Israel was a privileged people. They had the Law and the prophets and the glory; but their rottenness was complete: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (ver. 6). Such, then, is the revealed philosophy concerning evil—the richer the life the more rotten the corruption.

II. THE MEASURE OF OPPORTUNITY IS THE MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." But in head and heart they had been "nourished and brought up as children." And as children their character ought to have reflected the Father's image. "Ye are my witnesses," saith the Lord. But Israel had become vain, proud, carnal, self-seeking, idolatrous. They imagined themselves elected to the enjoyment of privilege instead of to the use and responsibility of privilege. Hence they sought to become a "vortex" instead of a "fountain." And evil had spread through them. Their lofty position had made the leaven of their influence wider. Alas! the "children" were "corrupters"!—W. M. S.

Ver. 9.—*The faithful remnant.* "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." This is as music of hope amid a strain of grief. And it is the first note of an evangelic prophecy, which is to merge into the "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," of a later chapter. Where there is life there is hope in national calamity as well as in personal sickness. "A cottage in a vineyard" *is* a cottage that speaks of home (ver. 8), "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers" is a centre of care and toil; and a very small remnant may be a branch of healing to save a nation.

I. THE SMALL REMNANT BELONGS TO THE LORD OF HOSTS. Therefore power is on their side. What a contrast!—"host" and "remnant." Even so. God can multiply the loaves and fishes. God can put such power into the remnant that they may be able to say, "Greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us." We must not judge by numbers or statistics, nor by quantity, but by quality. Whose are these? Decide that; and then "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," for that faith centres in God.

II. THE SMALL REMNANT IS ANTISEPTIC. It can arrest disease. It can heal. Take a few grains of some chemical substance, and they will colour and cleanse an entire stream. "We should have been as Sodom is." Yes; God's judgments on a nation, as in our own at the time when profligate plays had undermined the moral life, have saved the nation. For when men laugh at sin, well-nigh the deepest depth has been reached; but godly souls are then used as leaven to purify the body politic. Judah and Jerusalem were almost gone, but the Lord had mercy on them.

III. THE SMALL REMNANT IS TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE LORD. The next verse says, "Hear ye the Word of the Lord." It is a Divine revelation that is to save them. And the prophet who speaks is called Isaiah, or Iesahiaha, signifying "the salvation of the Lord;" so that though the prophet speaks stern words of rebuke, his very name contains the glorious issue of his work. His work was laborious and long—he prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Terribly profane were those days, for in the days of Ahaz "the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem." But God sent his Word and healed them; and *that* is the true regenerator in every age.—W. M. S.

Ver. 18.—*Salvation to the uttermost.* "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The previous verses show that the Jews had mistaken *the ideal* of Divine services; they had turned them into a correct ritual, to a multitude of sacrifices without purpose. And purpose or motive is the very heart of religion. They were devotional, but cruel. "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." It was all empty ceremony. The solemn meeting even was iniquity. A change must come. And it must begin in *character.* "Cease to do evil." Yes; but that is not enough. Negation is not salvation. There must be life unto God as well as death unto sin. "Learn to do well." Then come the words of our text. They sound a strange note at first; they speak of what man cannot do and what God can.

I. HERE IS THE GOSPEL IN ISAIAH. Free, full, perfect redemption. We see in these words Gethsemane and Calvary. There God's purpose was fulfilled; but it is in his heart when these words are spoken, for "the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world." It is a glorious gospel—God giving himself for the world. And now, as we read Israel's sins in this record, we may see even then that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

II. HERE IS THE REASONABLENESS OF RELIGION. How condescending! Let *us*—the Infinite and the finite, the immaculate and the evil. Yet so it is. God says, "While you are stained with blood and cloaked with hypocrisy, I can have nothing to say to you or to do with you." It cannot be that light should have fellowship with darkness. That *is* reasonable surely. But how can the sins of Judah and Jerusalem be purged away? Amendment is not atonement. And God is their Ransom, the high God is their Redeemer!

III. HERE IS THE CHARTER OF THE CHURCH'S LIBERTY. These words will never be forgotten. They have comforted millions. It is not liberty *to* sin, but salvation from all sin, and from the punishment of sin. Not from punishment only, but from sin itself, in all its forms, all its depths, all its degrees! For the colours are chosen as the symbols of the most marked and malignant evil—scarlet and crimson. Yet God is able to save to the uttermost. The words are best understood beneath the cross and in the history of redeemed men in every age.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Ingratitude and intervention.* The "vision of Isaiah" during the reigns of four kings of Judah (ver. 1), and the declaration (ver. 2) that "the Lord hath spoken" (or speaketh), suggests—

I. THE FACT THAT GOD HAS INTERVENED AND DOES INTERVENE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS. 1. Such Divine intervention *ought not to have been necessary.* For God has so ordered everything around us, and has so constituted us ourselves, that there were abundant sources of truth and heavenly wisdom without it. All visible nature (Rom. i. 20); the bounties of Divine providence (Acts xiv. 17); the manifestations of Divine pleasure and displeasure in the events and issues of life (Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16); the conscience that speaks and strikes within the soul—the moral judgment of which our spiritual nature is capable (Prov. xx. 27; Acts xxiv. 16; Rom. ii. 15); —these should have sufficed for man's instruction, integrity, perfection. But we find, from the religious history of our race, that these sources of enlightenment and influence have not been sufficient. 2. There has been *needed,* and there has been *granted, special intervention from God.* "The Lord hath spoken" to mankind: (1) From the Fall to the Incarnation, God intervened, "at sundry times and in divers manners"—by

such visions as those he gave to Isaiah, and which the prophet communicated to the people; by creating and ordaining men of illumination and leadership, such legislators as Moses and Nehemiah, such kings as David and Hezekiah, such prophets as Elijah and John Baptist; by the institutions and precepts of the Law; by parental chastisements. (2) *At* and *in* the Incarnation itself: when the eternal Father said to the human race, "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" by the words, the works, the sorrow, the death, the resurrection, of that Son of man who was the Son of God. (3) From the Ascension to this present time: by the Word of his truth; by the ministry of the gospel; by the corrections of his disciplinary hand; by the quickening influences of his Spirit. By these things "the Lord is speaking" to us still, is speaking to us all.

II. HUMAN INGRATITUDE THE OCCASION OF THE DIVINE INTERVENTION. What is it that calls forth the Divine utterance? It is the shameful ingratitude of his own sons. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." There are great and terrible crimes which have to be recorded against the human race; there are evil and shameful wrong-doings which stain and darken many individual lives; but there is one common and inexcusable wrong, to which all people and all souls must plead guilty, one common sin, with which we have all to reproach ourselves,—it is that with which God himself reproaches Israel—heinous and aggravated ingratitude. 1. God has done everything to attach us to himself. He has closely related us to himself; he has made us his children; he has expended upon us the lavish love, the patient care, the multiplied bounties, of a Father's heart, of a Father's hand. 2. We have broken away from his benignant rule. We "have rebelled against him;" our rebellion includes forgetfulness, inattention, dislike, insubmissiveness, disobedience. To whom we owe everything we are and have, to him we have rendered *nothing* for which he has been looking, *everything* which has been grievous in his sight.

III. OUR FITTING ATTITUDE WHEN GOD IS SPEAKING. When God speaks, let every voice be hushed; let all things everywhere, even the greatest and most majestic of all, lend their reverent attention. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." There are (1) those who mock; (2) those who are deliberately deaf, who close their ears by filling them with noisy activities or absorbing pleasures; (3) those who are persistently unconcerned; (4) those who pay a passing and fruitless consideration; (5) those who bring a reverent and obedient inquiry.—C.

Ver. 3.—*Obligation and interest.* I. THE WEIGHTIEST OBLIGATION. Isaiah speaks of ownership as a relation existing between a brute beast and a man; the "ox knoweth its owner." There is a legal and not unimportant sense in which a man may own an animal; the creature is his in so far as this, that no one else can lay an equal claim to its use, and no one can dispute his legal right to employ it in his service. In a far larger sense than this does man belong to God. God has that strong and indefeasible claim (1) which the Creator has on the creature he has called into being; (2) which the Divine Sustainer has on the one whom he has been momentarily preserving in being; (3) which the generous Giver has on the one upon whom he is bestowing innumerable and invaluable benefactions; (4) which the merciful Judge has on the one he has spared again and again when life has been forfeited by wrong-doing; (5) which the Divine Friend has on the one whom he has delivered at the greatest possible cost to himself. Surely he is, in very deed, our Divine Owner: to him we belong; our lives, our powers, ourselves, are *his*. There is nothing which the brute of the field owes to his human master, there is nothing which man owes to man, that is comparable to that strong, supreme obligation under which we all rest to God.

II. THE HIGHEST INTEREST. The ass or any other domestic animal has the greatest interest in his "crib:" there he finds food, rest, renewal,—life. The highest interest which man has is not in the place where he secures food and rest. This is, indeed, necessary for his bodily well-being. But in gaining this he does not find *his life*. The life of man is in an instructed mind and, still more distinctively, in a well-ordered soul; in an intelligence that holds the highest truth it is capable of receiving; in a heart that fills and overflows with purest and holiest emotions; in a will that chooses the wisest courses; in a spiritual nature that realizes and rejoices in its highest relationships. A man who acts as if his chief interest were in a comfortable "crib," a well-stocked "stall," is a man who does not know himself and his opportunities.

III. THE DIVINE REPROACH. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," etc. The brute beast has sense enough to recognize his master, discernment enough to perceive what is best for him to do, but instructed and enlightened Israel, recipients of so many mercies, and with all their golden chances of enlargement and elevation, did not recognize their God nor understand their true and real interests. When we live in ignorance of God and in pursuit of the lower instead of the higher blessedness, we may see ourselves condemned and feel ashamed in our soul as we look on the beasts of the field, and see them using their humble powers to discharge their duties and to enjoy their heritage. A life of spiritual ignorance is (1) a *shameful* thing, rebuked by the "beasts that perish;" (2) a *guilty* thing, exciting the high displeasure of Almighty God, drawing down his urgent and powerful remonstrance; (3) a *needless* thing,—it is in our power to rise above it, if we will and when we will. The last word of the text, as rendered in our version, is suggestive of the true way of return. We have to "consider," to reflect upon our obligation and our interest; and honest and serious consideration must lead to self-condemnation, conviction will end in repentance, and repentance will issue in eternal life.—C.

Ver. 4.—*The course of sin.* It is true that both righteousness and sin have very varied manifestations, the course of one good or one bad man's life differing widely from that of another. Yet there is a logical and moral order in which both holiness and iniquity pursue their path from their beginning to their end. The course of sin is not indicated by the sequence of these accusations, but the different steps are included in the prophetic denunciation.

I. IT BEGINS IN THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SOUL FROM GOD. The first movement in the soul's downward course is to "forsake the Lord"—to withdraw itself from him. At first it has no intention to take up an attitude of positive rebellion; it does not say to itself, "I will not have this One to reign over me." But it withholds its thoughts, its affection, its consultation of his revealed will, its activity and contribution in the field of Christian work. It fails to "magnify" him in its own mind and sphere; it "follows afar off;" it loses its hold on him, and its joy in him. It allows an increasing distance to be placed between itself and him.

II. IT SHOWS ITSELF IN WRONG-DOING. They who withhold from God the reverence and the obedience which are his due soon become "a seed of evil-doers." Morality rests on religion as on its only solid basis. Without a sense of religious obligation—as individual and national histories abundantly testify—moral principles will soon decline and disappear. When God is forgotten and his will is disregarded, life becomes darkened with evil deeds, it is stained with vice and crime.

III. IT PASSES INTO DELIBERATE DISLOYALTY TO HIM. "They are gone away backward;" or, "they have turned their backs upon him." The outcome of irreligion and iniquity is presumptuous infidelity, unblushing atheism: man turns his back on God.

IV. IT BRINGS DOWN THE HIGH DISPLEASURE OF THE HOLY ONE. "They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger." We read that God is "angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. vii. 11); that sin "grieves him at his heart" (Gen. vi. 6). The Divine emotion is doubtless different, in some respects, from that with which we are familiar, but there is enough resemblance between a holy man and the Holy One of Israel for us to say that such grief and anger as we feel when we look upon shameful sin and shocking crime God himself feels in an infinitely greater degree. It is a thought as true as it is terrible that, when we forsake, disobey, and disavow the Lord, his high and awful wrath is directed against our souls.

V. IT RESULTS IN THE HEAVIEST OF ALL PENALTIES THAT CAN BE BORNE. "A people *laden with iniquity.*" Sin, "when it is finished," when it has run its course and done its work, triumphs over the sinner; it may seem at first to be a power under his feet, and then to be a pleasure to his heart; but it ends in being a crushing weight upon his head. *It* becomes an insupportable burden; *he* becomes a soul "laden with iniquity." 1. Iniquity itself, ever growing and spreading, covers the entire surface of his life. 2. The effect of sin is to dwarf and shrivel his whole nature. A man who has given away to sin (notably to such a hateful vice as intemperance, or licentiousness, or gambling) suffers like a man who all his life bears a burdensome weight upon his shoulders. He "bears his iniquity." His soul is dominated, damaged, tyrannized, by

it. He is the miserable, pitiable slave of his own sin; it bears him down to the very ground in feebleness and humiliation. Yet there is one aspect of the course of sin which is even worse.

VI. IT CULMINATES IN THE PERPETRATION OF SPIRITUAL MISCHIEF. The people laden with iniquity are "children that are corrupters." The very darkest aspect of evil is that it communicates itself on every hand. It is a terribly infectious thing. Every corrupt man is a corrupter of souls. Who shall estimate the evil which one false life starts and spreads? Who shall calculate the distance, in space or time, which the consequences of one wrong action travel? 1. What need of mercy! 2. What need of Divine direction and guardianship!—C.

Vers. 5—9.—*Sin in its hopelessness.* I. THAT SIN IS MORE OR LESS RECLAIMABLE. Whatever we might have antecedently expected, we find practically, that there are those on whom Divine truth is far more likely to tell than it is on others. Thus (1) youth is more impressionable than age; (2) poverty is more accessible than riches; (3) the unprivileged are more open to influence than the "children of the kingdom." Time, pleasure, the misuse of sacred opportunity,—these things indurate the soul and make it far less responsive than it once was; so that there are some that are more hopeless than others.

II. THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNCHANGED BY THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD ARE THE MOST HOPELESS OF ALL. Many things are effective as spiritual weapons—the Word of God, the ministry of the gospel, the entreaties of friendship, the influence of a godly home, sacred literature, etc.; but not one of them is so penetrating, so affecting, so reformative, as the discipline of the Divine hand. When God comes to a man in his providence; when he sends loss, disappointment, bereavement; when he lays his correcting hand on the man himself,—then there is the deepest silence in the soul, then the voices which are from heaven reach the inmost chambers of the spirit. And if these be felt and heard in vain, if the lessons which come thus be unlearned by the rebellious heart, then the last state of that man is about the worst that is imaginable: "There is more hope of a fool than of him."

III. THAT THERE ARE THOSE UPON WHOM GOD SEEMS TO HAVE EXHAUSTED HIS DISCIPLINARY RESOURCES. The prophet says (ver. 5), "The whole head is sick," etc., already. As it is, the entire body is covered with open, unhealed wounds (ver. 6); the nation (the body politic) was witnessing the most harrowing evils and the most humiliating indignities to which it could be subjected (vers. 7, 8). What further chastisement *could* the arm of the Almighty inflict? By what severer blows could he recall his people to repentance and righteousness? So with individual men. God has sent them chastisement after chastisement, reminder on reminder; he has touched them in one part of their nature, he has laid his correcting hand on another part; he has visited them in many ways; he has multiplied his most solemn lessons unto them. What more *can* he do? Where "can they be stricken any more"? In what other way shall he strike their follies and seek to save their souls?

IV. THAT IN THEIR CASE FURTHER SUFFERING WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN AGGRAVATED SIN. Isaiah *might* well ask (if that be not the precise point), "*Why* should ye be smitten any more?" (ver. 5); he certainly does say, "Ye will revolt more and more." His thought apparently is that added blows will only mean increased rebelliousness. When a man (or a nation) has reached a certain depth in iniquity, the very thing (Divine chastisement) which ought to arrest and restore him will only goad him to proceed with quickened step on his evil way. Thus are the purposes of love defeated and the means of recovery perverted. And yet there remains one redeeming thought, viz.—

V. THAT, THOUGH COMPARATIVELY, SIN IS NOT UTTERLY HOPELESS HERE. The "daughter of Zion" was little better than a "cottage in a vineyard," a "lodge in a garden of cucumbers" (ver. 8); but it *was* left, to be at least as much as that. The Lord of hosts *had* left a "remnant," though that was "very small" (ver. 9). Jerusalem had not yet become as "the cities of the plain." The penalty of sin is great: it reduces the sinner very low indeed; it robs him of his heritage; it leaves him almost nothing of the spiritual faculties, of the filial portion (Luke xv. 12), of the heavenly hopes with which he was endowed. But it leaves *something*—some sensibility to which we can

appeal; some thread of willingness by which we can draw him; some plank by which, through a thousand perils, he may yet reach the shore.

"The blackest night that veils the sky
Of beauty hath a share,
The darkest soul hath signs to tell
That God still lingers there."

C.

Vers. 10—20.—*The prophetic strain.* Isaiah had gone only a very little way in his testimony when he broke into the true prophetic strain. The prophets were God's witnesses against the mere shows and semblances of piety, and for the reality of godliness and virtue; they lived to expose the false and to expound the true, to pierce with keen-edged sword that which was hollow and rotten, and to commend with glowing zeal that which was sound and good. Here we have a deliverance which evidently came hot from a heart that burned with fiery indignation.

I. THE UTTER INSUFFICIENCY OF MERE RITUAL TO COMMAND THE DIVINE FAVOUR. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" etc. (vers. 11—13). These various offerings were all according to the commandment, correct, scriptural; but they were unacceptable; they were "vain oblations," all of them. They were ineffectual, because they came from hands that were unclean, from hearts that were unholy. It is a significant and solemn fact that men may be engaged in doing those very things, using those very words which God has plainly prescribed, and yet they may be utterly failing to win his Divine favour. The services of the sanctuary, the "eating of that bread and drinking of that cup," the ministries of the pulpit and the study,—all these may be unimpeachably correct, but yet wholly unacceptable. If the heart be not right, if the life be not pure, they *are* unacceptable.

II. ITS POSSIBLE ODIOUSNESS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. Those who are rendering an abundance of formal devotion are actually denominated by a term which indicates the last extremity of wrong-doing: "Ye rulers of Sodom," "ye people of Gomorrah;" they are addressed as if they were responsible citizens of those infamous cities. Jehovah not only does "not delight in the blood of bullocks" (ver. 11), and not only does *not require* this kind of service (ver. 12); not only does he call the oblations "vain," but he declares incense to be *an abomination* to him (ver. 13). "Your new moons . . . my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them" (ver. 14). The thought is positively terrible that the very things we are doing with a view to gain God's pleasure may be bringing down upon us his awful anger; that the very means we are taking to avert his wrath may be only adding to its weight. It is certain that the offerings of the hypocrite are of this kind. This prophetic strain is not only applicable to the specialities of the Hebrew ritual; it includes all the ordinary approaches of the human soul to the Divine Father; it embraces that which we call "prayer" (see ver. 15). And we have to face the fact that the most devout utterances of our lips, in the most approved or even in biblical phraseology, may be worse than worthless in the sight of God.

III. THE PRIMARY DUTY OF REPENTANCE. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings," etc. (vers. 16, 17). When men are loving and practising unrighteousness, the first thing they have to do is to "put it away," both from their minds and from their lives. The drunkard must first dash down his cup, the untruthful man must at once give up his falsehoods, the licentious man his impurities, the dishonest man his rogueries; it is a vain and even guilty thing for a man to kneel in prayer or to sit down at the Lord's table when he is deliberately intending to go on in his sin: that is nothing less than mockery; it is defiance assuming the attitude of devotion. "Let the wicked forsake his way," etc. (ch. lv. 7).

IV. THE READINESS OF GOD TO PARDON THE PENITENT. (Ver. 18.)

V. THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH GOD PLACES BEFORE ALL HIS CHILDREN—OBEY AND PROSPER, OR REFUSE AND SUFFER. (Vers. 19, 20.) They who now return unto the Lord from the state of sin in which they are found—from crime, from vice, from ungodliness, from indecision—and who attach themselves to the service of Jesus Christ, shall "eat the good of the land;" to them shall be granted the sunshine of God's favour, the blessedness of Christ's friendship and service, the hope of a heavenly heritage. But

they who remain apart and afar from God, who will not have the Man Christ Jesus to reign over them—they must abide under the condemnation of the Holy and the Just.—C.

Ver. 18.—*The magnitude of the Divine mercy.* I. THE FULNESS OF THE DIVINE MERCY. In estimating the fulness of God's grace to mankind, we must include: 1. His patience toward all men, both penitent and impenitent. From the beginning of sin until the present hour God has been forbearing to inflict penalty. "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." The times of long-continued ignorance God overlooked, or did not interpose with special penalty or redemption (Acts xvii. 30). 2. His pardon offered to the penitent and believing. In the Law we read that he is "the Lord God, merciful and gracious," etc. (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7); in the Psalms we read that he is "plenteous in mercy," etc. (Ps. ciii. 8, 11, 12); in the prophets we read that "he is merciful and will not keep anger for ever" (Jer. iii. 12; and see text and ch. lv. 7—9; Dan. ix. 9). In the gospel of Jesus Christ remission of sins is a cardinal doctrine (Matt. xxvi. 28; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts ii. 38; v. 31; x. 43; xxvi. 18). 3. The thoroughness of his forgiveness. (1) *The breadth which it covers.* (*a*) The worst kinds of sin—blasphemy, idolatry, all forms of impurity, murder, etc.; (*b*) the most criminal condition—long-continued forgetfulness, sin against multiplied privilege, persistent and obdurate rebelliousness of heart, etc. (2) *The depth to which it goes down.* (*a*) Penetrating to the most secret thoughts of the mind, to the most inward motives of the soul, to the slightest choices of the will; (*b*) extending to the thoughts and things which have been overlooked and omitted, as well as to those which have been entertained and wrought. (3) *The height to which it rises.* (*a*) Leading to actual holiness—for pardon is the fruit of penitence and faith, and with them in the soul, the scarlet becomes as snow, the crimson as wool, the mind is radically changed, the life is thoroughly transformed; (*b*) including full restoration, not merely the not exacting penalty, but the actual bestowal of the Divine favour—admitting to the Father's home and table, lavishing upon the accepted child every sign and proof of parental love.

II. THE DIVINE ARGUMENT THEREFROM. God condescends to "reason" with us; he appeals to our sense of obligation, to our regard for our own interests, to our human affections, etc. The argument here is not stated, but it may be easily inferred. If such is the Divine mercy—so large and full and free, then *how wise to seek it at once!* because of: 1. The blessedness of being right with God henceforth. 2. The uncertainty of the future. Between our souls and its possession may be interposed (1) sudden death; (2) hardening of the heart; (3) increased outward obstacles. 3. The immeasurable issues which are at stake—"everlasting punishment or life eternal."—C.

Vers. 21—31.—*Divine dealing with the degenerate.* We have here—

I. DEPLORABLE DEGENERACY. 1. *Degeneracy of character.* "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" etc. (vers. 21, 23). There is nothing more melancholy than the sight of a people or city, or of a human being fallen from spiritual and moral integrity to a depth of sin and folly—devoutness exchanged for impiety, conscientiousness for unscrupulousness, self-restraint and self-respect for laxity or even for licentiousness, spiritual excellency for moral unloveliness. But many illustrations confront us, both in history and experience. 2. *Degeneracy of power.* The result of this spiritual decline is weakness: the silver becomes dross, the wine is mixed with water (ver. 22). The sinner is not long before he finds that there is "no might in his hand" (Deut. xxviii. 32). Sin saps the life-blood from the soul, and leaves it strengthless and useless. It makes him to be as an Oriental garden from which the life-giving waters have been withdrawn, as a tree whose leaves have faded and fallen (ver. 30)—everything is parched, barren, fruitless.

II. DIVINE VISITATION. This includes: 1. *Punishment;* the outpouring of wrath upon the wicked, involving (1) personal ruin (vers. 24, 28); and this (2) the result of the sinner's evil deeds: the man himself is as tow, and his work (not the maker of it) is as a spark which enkindles it (ver. 31). The "work" of the drunkard, *i.e.* his intemperance, consumes him—it wastes his estate, it enfeebles his strength, it reduces the number of his friends, it brings him to destruction; and so with other vices which are the "works" of the unholy; they burn and they consume, and nothing quenches

them. One part of the Divine punishment is (3) the shame with which the guilty are confounded: "They shall be ashamed . . . and confounded" (ver. 29). It is one of the constant penalties of sin that, when enjoyment is over, then comes shame and confusion of face. The soul is smitten with a sense of abasement; it suffers the smartings of conscience, the pangs of remorse. 2. *Purification.* (Vers. 25—27.) God would turn his hand—his hand that healed and saved; and, in his purity, would purge away the dross, and restore to the favoured city its ancient righteousness. Penalty would become correction, and correction would end in transformation and redemption. Whether God visits (1) nations, or (2) churches, or (3) individual souls, it is that they may "come to themselves;" that they may return unto him; that they may be purified of their iniquity, their pride, their selfishness, their worldliness, their self-indulgence; and that they may rejoice in his holy service.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The times and mission of Isaiah.* God raises up the man for the age, giving him gifts for the particular work which the age may demand. History is not a mere faithful record of things done, but a wise and sympathetic estimate of men doing. A man has more power on us than a truth. A man is grander than any doctrine or any book. Christianity, as a mere system, is a powerless thing; it never quickened anybody from his death of trespasses and sins. The personal Christ is our life. In the sphere of philanthropy we are interested in the doings of Howard and Wilberforce and Nightingale; in politics we trace the influence of Pitt and Burke and Cobden; and in the field of patriotism you kindle into enthusiasm all America when you speak of Washington and Lincoln, and all Scotland when you speak of John Knox. But it is not an easy thing for us to reproduce the men of a long bygone history. The men of one period must not be judged by the ideas and manners and social sentiments of another period; and yet it makes a surpassing demand on us if we have to create, with our imaginations, times wholly differing from our own. If we could be set down amidst the ruins of the buried Pompeii, and see around us the rooms, the furniture, the pictures, the ornaments, and the utensils, we think that, with their help, it would be easy to reproduce the life of old Rome; we could fill banqueting-hall, and theatre, and baths, and market-place with the men and women of that age. With old Israel we can have no such helps; we are dependent on the historical and imaginative faculties.

I. THE PROPHET HIMSELF. "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amotz." Little is known of his private life, and nothing of his personal appearance. He resided in Jerusalem; he was married, and his wife is spoken of as a prophetess. They had two sons; both were named with prophetic names, the two taken together embodying the substance of Isaiah's message. The one was called "Maher-shalal-hash-baz"—"He hasteth to the prey"—indicating the swift desolating forces that were coming on the people of Judæa; the other was called "Shear-Jashub"—a "remnant shall return"—indicating the mercy of God towards some, the mercy with which so much of the Book of Isaiah deals. It appears that the prophet wore a garment of haircloth or sackcloth, the ordinary symbol of repentance among Eastern nations; and so his very appearance reminded the people of his message. Isaiah prophesied for nearly fifty years. No record is left of his death, but Jewish traditions represent him as martyred in the reign of Manasseh—sawn asunder with a wooden saw. He was a prophet, not necessarily foretelling future events, but a directly inspired man; one who received communications from God which he was to address to the people. The prophet had three things to do: (1) to awaken the nation to a sense of sin in disobeying and forsaking the Lord their God; (2) to counteract the delusion that an external observance of rites and ceremonies is sufficient to satisfy God; and (3) to oppose the delusions of those who imagined that their election as a nation, and their covenant with Jehovah, formed an absolute security against overwhelming national judgments.

II. THE TIMES IN WHICH THE PROPHET LIVED. They were times of national decline and decay. Isaiah saw four kings upon the throne of Judah. He saw the flickering of the candle ere it went out in the darkness. There was some appearance of prosperity; but Isaiah knew that it did but gloze over deep national corruption that called for national judgments. During the time of Isaiah the neighbouring kingdom of the ten tribes did actually fall—the corruptions of idolatry and sensuality, in their case, running a swifter course; and the prophet holds up their case as a solemn warning to the people

of Judah. The first six chapters of Isaiah have been referred to the reign of Uzziah, a king whose prosperity developed a strong self-will and masterfulness, which led him to attempt a sad act of sacrilege. Jotham was a pious king; but Ahaz plunged into all the idolatries of the surrounding nations, making molten images for Baal, and sacrificing his children by passing them through the burning hands of Moloch in the valley of Hinnom. The people were only too ready for this debasing change. But judgment quickly followed on the heels of iniquity. Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus attacked and injured the country, though they failed to take Jerusalem. Soon other enemies came—Syrians in front, Philistines behind. Ahaz sought help from Tiglath-Pileser, King of Assyria, who soon turned upon him, and Assyria became the gravest enemy of Israel.

III. THE WORK WHICH THE PROPHET HAD TO DO. 1. His first work was to make men understand that their sufferings were actual Divine judgments on their sins, and therefore calls, like thunder-peals, to awaken them to repentance. God will not leave men in their troubles to imagine that some evil chance has befallen them, that they are the victims of accident. By the mouth of some prophet he will assuredly vindicate the connection between sin and suffering. 2. But Isaiah had also to bring comfort to the people of God in the time of national calamity. Godly people are often bowed down by the pressure of surrounding evil, and in their despairing they sometimes say, "God hath forgotten to be gracious." God will never leave his faithful few to sink under discouragements. 3. Isaiah's work may be more precisely stated as this: he was to prepare the way for the spiritual kingdom of God, in the person of Messiah the crucified yet glorified Redeemer. The old theocracy was breaking up, and God's rule in the world might be lost. Isaiah was to say that it was only passing into a spiritual theocracy, giving place to the spiritual and eternal reign of God in souls. In Isaiah messages of severity and of mercy are most graciously blended. The following passage precisely represents his mission: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Sin as broken sonship.* Literally, the verse reads, "Sons I have made great and high, and they have broken away from me." The later conception of the Jewish covenant embraced the ideas of fatherhood and sonship, and thus prepared for the revelation of the fatherhood of God in the teachings of the Lord Jesus, and for the apprehension of the "sonship of men" through Christ's own sonship. It is the point of impression, that this relation intensifies the guilt of the people's unfaithfulness and rebellion, just as Absalom's relation, as son, to David aggravates the criminality of his deceptions and his revolt. In addition to the actual relation of father and son, the text suggests the exceptional goodness and considerateness of Israel's Father-God. He had brought the nation to its maturity, and given it a high place among the kingdoms. And still the extreme painfulness of sin is not its breaking of law, its insult to kingly majesty, or the necessarily bitter consequences that must attend upon it; it is its filial ingratitude, its dishonour of the sacred claims and duties of sonship. All heaven and earth may be called to see this shameful sight—children turning against their father.

I. THE SIN OF THE UNFILIAL SON. Dwell upon its characteristic features. We estimate the motive and spirit of the wrongs rather than the precise nature of the acts. Show the aggravations of such sin. Every persuasion of dependence, love, and duty must be pushed aside ere unfilial sin can become possible.

II. ITS POSSIBLE EXCUSE IN AN UNWORTHY FATHER. This is the only excuse that can be urged, and this does not count for much. The natural relation sustains the demand for obedience, and nothing can conflict with parental law save the supreme law of God. If even parents command what is contrary to God's revealed will, we must obey the Father in heaven rather than the father on earth. Illustrate how this conflict of the human and Divine law was the burden of the Greek dramas. Short of this, obedience must be fully rendered, even when fatherly requirements cannot be approved.

III. THE ABSENCE OF ALL SUCH EXCUSE WHEN THE FATHER IS GOD. His will is right, is love. Apprehend what he *is*. Apprehend what he *has been* to our forefathers

and to us. Realize the "goodness" of him in whom our breath is, and whose are all our ways, and then the unspeakable iniquity must be to grieve him, disobey him, and revolt from him.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The foolishness of increasing Divine judgments.* The plea of the prophet appears to be this: "You have run terrible lengths in sin; and you have seriously suffered from the consequences of sin; now why will you bring down fresh judgments upon your head through persisting in your infidelity" (comp. Ezek. xviii. 31)? So serious, indeed, had been the penalties of transgression already that there seemed to be no part of the body politic upon which another stroke might fall; new inflictions must come upon old sores and wounds. "The two noblest parts of the human body are here selected to represent the body politic; and the extreme danger to which it was exposed is significantly set forth under the image of universal sickness and languor. There were no parts which did not suffer from the calamities which sin had entailed." Remember the expression of St. Paul (Rom. ii. 5), "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

I. ALL SINS ARE FOLLOWED BY JUDGMENTS. We say, by consequences; and we even admit that they are usually "unpleasant" consequences; but we must go further and admit that every sin—be it neglect, or be it wilful disobedience, whether it concern the individual or the community—is attended by its appropriate and necessary result; and that this is always the Divine judgment. Sorrow waits on sin. Suffering follows sin. Moral deterioration is Divine judgment. Painful circumstance is Divine judgment. The old world sins, and comes under the judgment of the Flood. Sodom sins, and comes into the judgment of the Divine fires. David sins, and quarrel and curse break up his family and break his heart. Judgment always links on to sin, and no human power can snap the uniting tie. If we will enjoy sin we must bear suffering. Illustrate by the pagan conceptions of the Furies and the Fates. Something bad grows out of all sin; and "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

II. ALL JUDGMENTS ARE CHASTISEMENTS. It is impossible to associate punishment, as a mere exercise of tyrannical power, with God the great Father. In the long run, or in the short run, all Divine judgments must be proved to have been remedial in their design. It is quite beyond our province to decide to what extent the free-will, the self-will, of man may resist the remedial purpose of God's judgments. All we can say is, that a father's punishments must be, at the very heart of them, chastisements; and that the plea of the passage before us rests upon the fact that God had been smiting in order to correct, and was deeply grieved because his correcting purpose had hitherto been so successfully resisted. Illustrate how epidemics and plagues, following upon sanitary sins, are designed to correct sanitary evils. The same applies in moral spheres. From this point a review of God's dealings with us in our past lives may be taken, and we may be searchingly reminded how we have resisted the remedial influence of God's chastisements.

III. REFUSAL TO LEARN BY CHASTISEMENT IS FRESH SIN. This the prophet pleads. "You are further grieving God by this, that you will not be humbled; you will not learn; you will not let him lift his judgments off you." Illustrate by the hardened boy who will not respond to his father's punishment. That hardened resistance is a fresh sin.

IV. FRESH SIN INVOLVES FURTHER AND WORSE JUDGMENTS. Before, the judgment was but to reveal the evil character of the sin; *now*, the judgment has to bear upon the heart-hardness, and it must be more searching and severe. The secret of more than half our calamities and afflictions is, that they are second and sharper strokes because we would not heed the first. Israel was swept away into captivity at last, because she would resist the smaller national calamities that were gracious Divine persuasions to repentance. In a great measure it is true that our life-troubles are in our own hands. We suffer so much because we are such dull and unwilling scholars in the school of God.

V. THE WORST OF ALL WOES WOULD BE THE SUSPENSION OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS. There is no more terrible conception than that ordinarily awakened by the passage "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." The unspeakable calamity for a

man or for a nation would be for God to lay down his chastening rod, and stop his judgments. There is hope for us so long as he will smite.—R. T.

Vers. 11—13.—*Mere ceremonial an offence to God.* What a painful sight it would be to see some of our houses with the fronts off!—to look into the abodes of vice; to witness the impurity and profanity, and wretchedness and wild licence, and seething corruption of our large towns! That sight we may escape, but we must see ourselves with the fronts off—those false fronts with which self-worship hides the truth from view. We must look behind the gaily painted scenes of a decent moral life and conformity with outward social laws. We must know our souls if we would know ourselves. Isaiah seeks to lay bare to the view of Israel their transgressions, by lifting off them that covering of religious service under which they tried to hide the truth of their moral state. That is the burden of this first chapter. The people drew near to God with the lip, but their heart was far from him. Their relations to the worship of God in the temple were anxiously maintained, but with that they thought to be satisfied; and, while keeping up the ceremonials, they "followed the devices and desires of their own hearts." Jehovah declares that the merely formal service of the impure is an abomination unto him. Those very sacrifices and offerings which were his delight, became hateful to him when offered with unclean hands, and when no loving, trusting, obedient hearts found expression through them. "I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting."

I. THE POSSIBILITY OF UNITING TOGETHER INIQUITY AND THE SOLEMN MEETING. At first it may seem as if that were not possible. Surely conscience will prevent men from joining in religious worship who are indulging in open sin. Perhaps this is the real reason why so many people around us stay away from worship. But it is a fact that many of the worst men have kept, all through their lives, in outward association with religious worship. In the times of the old monasteries you might have listened to the solemn services and heard the monks breathe out strains of holy music set to holy words. You might have seen priests in gorgeous garments waving incense and uplifting the symbol of the Redeemer. They were precise in all prayers, minute in all ceremonial. And many of them were faithful and true men. But History writes one of her saddest pages about many of them. They were given over to gluttony, drunkenness, and immorality, and were uniting "iniquity and the solemn meeting." This is even a possibility for our own times and for ourselves. Many of us, if we were conscious of heart-sins and life-sins cherished and loved, would only become more exact in religious formalities, trying to cover up the wrong and hide it, as far as possible from our own view. We do religiously somewhat as Cain did when he hid his murdered brother in the ground, and then set vigorously to work in his fields, trying, by sheer earnestness in work, to persuade himself and to persuade others that he knew nothing whatever of his brother's blood. We are not, however, so likely to unite the open forms of iniquity with the solemn meeting as we are the more secret forms, the inner heart-sins, which may be cherished without disgracing us before God; such sins as: 1. The unforgiving spirit. To fail to forgive is to sin. 2. Backslidings and lustings of heart: proud, selfish, sensual, corrupting thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And the God to whom we offer worship is the Heart-searcher, the Thought-searcher. 3. Openness to the vanities of the world. 4. Occasional yieldings to temptation and self-indulgence. Many indulge the idea that, if their indulgences do not become habitual, they need not interfere with their religious worship. Plead the Divine requirement as given in Ps. xxiv. 3—5.

II. THE VIEW GOD TAKES OF UNITING INIQUITY AND THE SOLEMN MEETING. "I am weary to bear." "I cannot away with." "It is an abomination to me." We should clearly distinguish what it is which is thus hateful to God. It is not the sacrifice, or the offering, or the solemn meeting. God takes delight in those places and in those services in which his Name is recorded. They are the highest things that can engage human attention, the seasons in which man transcends the earthly and anticipates the hallowed occupations of heaven. They are the times in which man ought to be the truest, the most sincere, the most himself; all cloaks, all hoods, all masks, all pride, ought to be laid aside whenever we pass the threshold of God's sanctuary. Naked, guileless, open souls alone may stand before the all-holy Lord. The thing which is so

hateful is the separation between a worshipping and an obedient heart. God has encouraged outward worship, that it might express, and strengthen while it expresses, the love and trust of an obedient heart. The husk becomes worthless when the worm of self and pride has eaten out the kernel. The dress is hideous which no longer clothes a warm living body, but covers, and scarcely hides, the skeleton of rebellion. The voice is hateful that is only a voice, and utters no joy, no trust, no love of the heart. Be true in thy worship, be spiritual, and God will look down on thee with delight and acceptance. Be formal, be insincere, and God will frown thee from his presence; from thine hands he will reject the costliest sacrifices and the grandest show of devotion. Our cherished sins will as surely be an offence to God as were those which are referred to in this chapter. Ours, indeed, are not sins of violence and blood, but rather sins of secret indulgence. We have seen the light of the sun as effectually hidden by thin light mists as by black thunder-clouds. And God's face has often been hidden by the mists of little transgressions. He notices sins of will. He observes sins of inadvertence. He sees sins of neglect. He reckons sins of nourished evil thoughts. More souls have died away from the love of God through the subtle plague-breath of little heart-sins than have fallen under the strokes of temptation in open conflict with evil. And what shall we do, if it is revealed to us that secret evils have come in upon our souls, and that the devil's work of woe has been progressing in us, and the work of God's grace in us is flagging and failing? What shall we do if we can detect stains of secret disobediences, unforgivings, and self-indulgences? Let us not stay away from worship; but let us at once obey in this: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well."—R. T.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Conditions of Divine acceptance.* The prophet has been dealing with the insufficiency of mere ceremonial as a ground of acceptance before God. He is equally severe on mere professions of penitence, that find no adequate expression in changed moral conduct and hearty return to the rules of duty and charity.

I. IT WOULD BE MISCHIEVOUS TO ACCEPT THE HARDENED. Mischievous for the hardened themselves, who would be made yet harder by a goodness they could not fail to misunderstand. Mischievous for all others, in whose minds moral distinctions would be confused, and the Divine righteousness sullied. Under no pretence, by no equivocations, through no disguises, can God possibly accept the guilty and impenitent. In this, as in all else, the Judge of all the earth will do right.

II. IT IS HOPELESS TO ACCEPT MERE PROFESSORS. For they are self-deluded, and would be kept from awakening to their true state, if God accepted them as they are. The man who is satisfied with profession, and fails to aim at godly living, can never appreciate Divine acceptance or rightly respond to it. Divine acceptance is one great help to *righteousness*, and this the professor neither admires nor seeks. What good is it to accept professors? God cannot get beyond their fine outer shell. They are apples of Sodom, acceptable neither to God nor man. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

III. GOD ACCEPTS ONLY THOSE WHOSE PENITENCE FINDS EXPRESSION IN EFFORTS TO DO RIGHT. They only show that they are sincerely desirous of help; and they only are in a moral condition to receive, and to use well, Divine forgiveness and favour. Show how intensely practical the plea is in the text: "Put away just those very sins that you have been so freely indulging in. But do not be satisfied with any mere negation of evil; seek opportunities of doing justice; take care to blend justice with charity; do the right, and do the kind to all those who cannot right themselves." Goodness as a *sentiment* is of little value. Goodness as a *life* God looks for, and man asks from his fellows. "I will show thee my faith *by my works*."—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Reasoning with God about our sins.* Conceive a man responding to this appeal, what may we think he would say to God, and what may we suppose God would reply?

I. FIRST PLEA. "Thou art revealed as the great God, inhabiting eternity, whose Name is Holy; who art of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. I am afraid thou wouldst not concern thyself about the sin, much less about the forgiveness, of such creatures as we are." What is God's answer? "I have a great interest in that little

world where you dwell. I have given you many proofs of it. I have bidden my great sun to shine on you, and quicken life and beauty everywhere around you. I am coming down continually in the rains and winds that provide food for you, coming down to attend your steps and ward off evils from you. It is quite true that by me even 'the very hairs of your head are all numbered.' If I take such interest in you, should I not concern myself about your sin, the worst of the evils that gather about you? Do you think I could temper the storms and the sunshine, keep away pestilence and blight, and not strive to take away sin? And there is something more: I *am* 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness.' You know that I am Light, Power, Majesty, King, Judge. But you do not really know me till you know that I am Love, and love will spend itself until every stain is cleansed from those whom it loves. My love sends forth streams that wash away sins." When love opens the cleansing fountain, what can we do but

"Plunge into the purple flood,
And rise into the life of God"?

II. SECOND PLEA. "I read that thou hast given a great Law, by which thy creatures are to be judged. 'The Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.' Thou hast said, 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' I do not see how thou canst keep thy justice and thy truth, and yet blot out my scarlet, my crimson sins." What is the reply? "It is indeed the mystery of mysteries, but love has solved it. I can be just and justifying. I have set forth my dear Son as your Sin-bearer, your Substitute, the Propitiation for your sin. In his righteous life, by his vicarious death, my Law is magnified and shown to be honourable. Not a stain can even seem to be upon it after such an obedience as Christ rendered, if I did gather every sinful creature into my love and heaven. I have myself put such an eternal honour upon Law by permitting my Son to submit to it, that none can ever doubt the transcendent glory of my justice."

III. THIRD PLEA. "But my sins are so great, so aggravated, it seems to me as though such sins as mine cannot even be atoned for; even if atoned for, I think I should never be able to hold up my head for very shame." Some of us know what scarlet sins mean, crimson sins, sins of deepest die. What is God's reply? "I have provided for the uttermost of sin in the infinite merit of my Son. His worth outweighs all sin; it can cover and blot out the deepest crimson stains. His sacrifice sends up such a fragrant incense to me that I can freely pardon all your iniquity. If his robe of righteousness cover you, I shall not see any of those stains; I shall accept you in him."

IV. FOURTH PLEA. "But my sins are not just acts of wilfulness and rebellion, they are the habits of my life, the neglectings and self-servings of my life. I hear of rolling sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue, and that is just the way with me. If I were forgiven, I fear I should just go on sinning still." But God answers, "I have provided also for this. I will pour out of my Spirit upon you; and to them that have no might he shall increase strength. He shall be Teacher, Guide, Comforter, Earnest, and Seal. He shall be with you always."

V. FIFTH PLEA. "Even if my scarlet sins are made like wool, and my crimson sins like the snow, I fear I shall never be able to return anything for such grace abounding." What a wonderful reply God makes to you, closing up your mouth and humbling you in the very dust! "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel, but for mine own Name's sake." Truly that is a wonderful answer. It is like God coming to us, opening the fountain of his being, and saying, "Look in, look long, and peer into the depths. *I am love.*" There is all the secret. Love saves. Love saves even those who never can hope to make worthy returns for love.—R. T.

Vers. 19—23.—*Unrighteousness a nation's curse.* Comp. Prov. xiv. 34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." The prophet is picturing the corrupt state of the metropolis, and contrasting its present moral degradation with the high and honourable character which it had formerly sustained. The following points may be illustrated, and the lessons of them enforced.

I. UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LEADERS IS THE CURSE OF A BAD EXAMPLE. Illustrate

by the mischievous influence of a corrupt court and aristocracy, and by the discontent produced by corruptions of the fountains of justice.

II. UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE PEOPLE ENFEEBLES THE NATIONAL LIFE. Illustrate by the effect of prevalent sensuality on the *morale* of soldiers. The moral degradation of France was the secret of her weakness when struggling against Germany. A nation's manhood sinks under the power of self-indulgence and sin. This was strikingly illustrated again and again in the history of God's people Israel. When they were idolatrous and immoral they were weak before their foes. Virtue is strength.

III. UNRIGHTEOUSNESS PREPARES THE WAY FOR NATIONAL EVILS. Both for such as are *internal* and for such as are *external*. Family life, society, religion, all are affected. Ordinary checks are removed. The sense of common weal no longer binds men together to seek national interests. And the "enemy coming in like a flood" finds no "standard of the Lord lifted up against them." Illustrate by the iniquities wrought by and encouraged by Hophni and Phinehas, and the consequent despising of Jehovah's worship, and inability to stand before the nation's foes. Nobody from outside can really hurt a nation. Nations hurt themselves by permitting vice and iniquity to run riot. Show what are the features of modern city sins, country sins, national iniquities. These are our peril, our woe, our curse. Against these every servant of the Lord must strive and plead and fight. Nations can build national life securely on no other foundation than this—morality, righteousness, the clean heart, and the clean hand. —R. T.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Hope in God's refinings.* Cheyne translates, "Ha! I will appease me through mine adversaries, and avenge me on mine enemies, and will bring back my hand upon thee, smelting out as with lye thy dross, and will take away all thy lead-alloy." The "lye" referred to is potash, which was used as a flux in purifying metals. Calamities, diseases, bereavements, failures, anxieties, are God's refining forces, but their influence for good depends on the state and condition of those to whom they come.

I. CALAMITIES OF LIFE TO MEN STANDING ALONE. Without any faith in God, or idea of the gracious meaning there is in earthly trouble. How such men fret and chafe, and question why they have to suffer, and give way to rebellious thoughts! Too often troubles only harden them, and drive them further still from God.

II. CALAMITIES OF LIFE TO MEN UNDER GOD'S WRATH. These must take intense and severe forms. They must first crush and humble, breaking down proud wills and rebellious spirits. They must first look like overwhelming judgments, and then, if men will respond to them, they shall seem to be gracious chastisements and refinings.

III. CALAMITIES OF LIFE TO MEN UNDER GOD'S MERCY. This opens the whole subject of God's refining and purifying of his people. We all have so much tin and dross mingled with our gold, and it is so good of God that he will not let the dross stay. With his "fires" and his "lye" he will graciously refine us, until all the dross is got away, and his image shines clear on our purified gold. And God's dealings with individuals may be illustrated by his dealings with nations, and especially with his own favoured nation.—R. T.

SECTION II. DENUNCIATION OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS UPON HIS PEOPLE (CH. II.—V.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—TITLE OF THE CHAPTER. It is generally allowed that the heading belongs, not to this chapter only, but to a section of the work, beginning here and ending at the close, either of ch. iv. or of ch. v. It is probable that the section was originally published separately.

Vers. 2—4.—PROPHECY OF THE LAST DAYS. The resemblance of this prophecy to Micah iv. 1—3 is so close as to necessitate the conclusion either that one of the two prophets copied from the other, or that both copied from an earlier document. The latter view, which is that taken by Rosenmüller, Maurer, De Wette, Meier, and Mr. Cheyne, seems preferable.

Ver. 2.—**In the last days**; literally, *in the sequel of the days*; but generally used of a remote future (Gen. xlix. 1; Numb. xxiv. 14; Deut. iv. 30, etc.). **The mountain of the Lord's house**; *i.e.* the Church, the true Zion, which is to be the antitype of the existing Zion, and is therefore given its material attributes. Spiritually, it would be a "mountain," as "a city set on a hill," which "could not be hid" (Matt. v. 14); and again, as occupying a position from which it would command the whole earth. **In the top of the mountains**; rather, *at the head of the mountains*; i.e. with pre-eminence over them. The metaphor is drawn from the common physical fact of a high mountain range culminating in a single supreme eminence. So Mount Hermon towers above the rest of the Antilibanus, Demavend over Elburz, Rowandiz over Zagros. The "mountains" above which the true Zion shall tower are the kingdoms, or perhaps the religions, of the earth. **All nations**; literally, *all the nations*; i.e. "all the nations of the earth" (comp. Ps. lxxii. 11). **Shall flow**; or, *stream*. A constant accession of converts from all quarters is intended. These are represented as continually streaming upward into the holy mountain of God's house.

Ver. 3.—**Many people**; rather, *many peoples*. **Shall go**; or, *set forth*. The prophet means to represent the nations as encouraging one another on the way. There is no jealousy among them, for the "mountain" can hold them all. **He will teach us.** The nations feel their ignorance of God, and their need of "teaching." God alone can teach them concerning himself (Rom. xi. 33, 34; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11); and "he will teach" them, either directly, as the Incarnate Son, or indirectly through those whom he has appointed to be "teachers" (1 Cor. xii. 28). **Of his ways**; *i.e.* "*some* of his ways," not "all of them;" for at present "we know in part" only (1 Cor. xiii. 9), and the greater portion of his ways are "past finding out" (Rom. xi. 33). The "ways" here spoken of are, no doubt, rules for the conduct of life, which are practically inexhaustible. God, however, will teach every man, who honestly seeks to learn, enough to enable him to "walk in his paths." **Out of Zion shall go forth the Law**; rather, *instruction*, or *teaching*. The word (*torah*) is without the article. The instruction intended is that of the Church of God.

Ver. 4.—**He shall judge among the nations.** This is clearly not yet fulfilled. How God shall ultimately "judge among the nations," or rather "between nation and nation," is a mystery which only the future can reveal. It has been supposed that "by his providential retributions he will decide those international questions out of which war ordinarily springs" (Kay). But it would seem to be at least as likely that he will bring the nations to such a pitch of wisdom and moderation, that they will voluntarily discard war, and agree to decide any disputes that arise by means of arbiters. The arbiter would then, like other judges, represent God, and "by him decree justice" (Prov. viii. 15). **Shall rebuke.** Rosenmüller translates, "Arbiter pacis sit;" Cheyne, "shall arbitrate." Here again, as in ver. 3, "people" should be "peoples." **They shall beat**, etc. On a sudden call to war, nations "beat their ploughshares into swords, and their pruning-hooks into spears" (Joel iii. 10). They will do the reverse "in the latter days," when God shall have "made wars to cease" (Ps. xlvi. 9) and "speak peace unto the nations" (Zech. ix. 10).

Vers. 5—11.—THE CONTRAST OF THE PRESENT WITH THE FUTURE. Having shown to Israel the vision of a far-distant future, when holiness and peace would reign upon the earth, and "the mountain of the Lord's house" would draw all men into it, the prophet returns to things as they are—first exhorting Israel to "walk in the light of Jehovah" (ver. 5), and then showing how far they have withdrawn from the light; (1) by magical practices (ver. 6); (2) by commercial greed (vers. 6, 7); (3) by ostentation and luxury (ver. 7); (4) by idolatry (ver. 8). Such being the case, punishment must come—mean and great must be equally brought low (ver. 9)—the people must fly to their cave-fastnesses (ver. 10), and hide themselves; they must be humiliated to the uttermost (ver. 11).

Ver. 5.—**O house of Jacob.** "House of Jacob" is the common expression in Isaiah, instead of "house of Israel" (see ch. viii. 17; x. 20; xiv. 1; xxix. 22; xlvi. 3; xlviii. 1; lviii. 1). It has no particular force, merely signifying "Israelites." **Come ye, and let us walk.** The same words as those of the "nations" in ver. 3, "Come ye, and let us go up." As the nations will invite each other "in the last days," so the prophet now invites his countrymen to walk with God.

Ver. 6.—**Therefore**; rather, *for*. The prophet, in calling upon Israel to "walk in the light of the Lord," implies that they are not so walking. He then proceeds to give the reasons of this. They are not, "*for* God has forsaken" them, or, "cast them off." The first reason is **because they be replenished from the east** (Revised Version,

"they be filled *with customs* from the east); i.e. they have adopted a number of Syrian, Assyrian, and Ammonite superstitions; *e.g.* high places, images, and "groves," the burning of their children in honour of Moloch, the use of divination and enchantment, etc. (2 Kings xv. 4; xvi. 3, 4; xvii. 10—12, 16, 17, etc.). Most of these practices reached the Israelites from Syria, though many had their origin either in Assyria or Babylonia. **Soothsayers, like the Philistines.** The "diviners" of the Philistines are mentioned in 1 Sam. vi. 2. By the word here employed, it would seem that they foretold the future from observations on the clouds and the general appearance of the sky. During the reign of Uzziah, the Israelites had been brought into closer contact with the Philistines than usual, through his conquest of several of their cities (2 Chron. xxvi. 6). **They please themselves in the children of strangers**; literally, *strike hands with the children of strangers* (comp. Job xxvii. 23). This is thought to refer to striking hands upon a bargain (Cheyne), and to be an allusion to the commercial activity of the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham (2 Kings xiv. 22; xvi. 6). But perhaps it does not mean more than familiarity.

Ver. 7.—**Full of silver and gold.** The results of the commercial activity—not evil things in themselves, but probably acquired by sharp dealing, and leading to undue softness and luxury. The Law had given a warning against "*greatly* multiplying silver and gold" (Deut. xvii. 17). For the fact of the vast abundance of the precious metals in Judæa at this time, see 2 Kings xiv. 16; xx. 13; 2 Chron. xxxii. 27; and compare Sennacherib's inscription on the Taylor Cylinder ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 163, 2nd edit.). **Full of horses . . chariots** (comp. Micah v. 10). There is no reason to believe that the Jews or Israelites ever possessed (unless it were under Solomon) any considerable cavalry or chariot force. But from the time of David horses and chariots were imported for convenience and for show by the kings, the princes, and the nobles (see 2 Sam. xv. 1; 1 Kings iv. 26; x. 28, 29; xxii. 31; Eccles. x. 7). Like the silver and the gold, they were signs of luxury and ostentation.

Ver. 8.—**Full of idols.** The historians declare that both Uzziah and Jotham maintained the worship of Jehovah and disallowed idolatry (2 Kings xv. 3, 34; 2 Chron. xxvi. 4; xxvii. 2), so that we must regard the idol-worship of the time as an irregular and private practice. (It is, perhaps, alluded to in 2 Chron. xxvii. 2; and the fact of its prevalence is stated in Amos ii. 4; Micah v. 13.) Perhaps Bishop Lowth is right in regarding it as mainly a continuation of the old private teraphim-worship ('Notes,' p. 25).

Ver. 9.—**And the mean man boweth down,** etc. So Ewald and Kay; but most other commentators render, "Therefore shall the mean man be bowed down, and the great man brought low, and thou shalt not [or, 'canst not'] forgive them" (Rosenmüller, Lowth, Gesenius, Knobel, Cheyne). The transition from narrative to threatening comes best at the beginning of the verse.

Ver. 10.—**Enter into the rock.** The limestone rocks of Palestine are full of extensive caverns, to which the Israelites often betook themselves in times of danger (see Judg. vi. 2; 1 Sam. xiii. 6; xxii. 1, etc.). The prophet exhorts them to flee thither now, but without stating what exactly is the peril (comp. vers. 19, 21). **Hide thee in the dust.** Not "the dust of humiliation" (Kay), but "the dust of the earth" (Gen. ii. 7), put here for the earth itself, as in ver. 19. **For fear of the Lord**; rather, *from before the terror of Jehovah.* Some awful manifestation of Jehovah's power is intended, its nature being still kept back and shrouded in darkness.

Ver. 11.—The effect of the judgment which, in ver. 9, was said to be the humiliation of high and low alike, is here declared with special reference to the high-minded and proud, whom it will humble more than others. **The Lord alone shall be exalted**; like a lofty and strong tower (comp. ch. xii. 4; xxxiii. 5).

Vers. 12—22.—THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. The prophet now, having announced that God is about to visit his people in anger (vers. 10, 11), proceeds to describe in highly rhetorical language the visitation itself, (1) as to its object, which is to bring down all that exalts itself against God (ver. 12); (2) as to its scope—it is to be upon trees, mountains, hills, towers, walls, ships, pleasant pictures, idols (vers. 13—18); (3) as to its practical effect, which will be to alarm and terrify, to make men fly and hide themselves, and to produce contempt of the idols in which they have so long trusted (vers. 19—21).

Ver. 12.—**For the day of the Lord of hosts** shall be upon every one; rather, *For the Lord of hosts shall have a day upon everything.* The passage is exegetical of "*that* day" in the preceding verse. A "day"—or time—is certainly coming which shall be emphatically "the Lord's"—a day on which he will descend to judgment

Proud . . . lofty . . . lifted up (comp. ver. 11). "The ideas of eminence, pride, and opposition to God melt into each other in the Old Testament" (Cheyne). **And he shall be brought low**; rather, *that it may be brought low* (so Gesenius and Cheyne).

Ver. 13.—**Upon all the cedars of Lebanon.** It is usual to take this metaphorically; and no doubt men are often compared to trees in Scripture (Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8; Job viii. 16, 17), and "cedars of Lebanon" especially are symbols of the great and proud ones (Ezek. xxxi. 3). But it has been well observed that either *all* the details of the description in the text must be taken literally, or *all* of them metaphorically, and that the mention of such objects as "ships of Tarshish" and "pleasant pictures" pleads strongly for a literal interpretation. The day of the Lord was upon the cedars when Sennacherib "with chariots upon chariots came up to the height of the mountains, to the *sides of Lebanon*, and *cut down the tall cedars thereof*, and the choice fir trees thereof" (ch. xxxvii. 24); and similar devastation accompanied, it is probable, the other invasions of the Assyrians (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 474, 475). **Upon all the oaks of Bashan.** The "oaks of Bashan" are celebrated also by Ezekiel (xxvii. 6) and by Zechariah (xi. 2). It is quite likely that the Assyrians cut timber in Bashan, as they did in Lebanon and Amanus.

Ver. 14.—**Mountains . . . hills.** It is Sennacherib's boast that he "came up to the height of the mountains" (ch. xxxvii. 24).

Ver. 15.—**Upon every high tower.** Uzziah and Jotham had, both of them, paid much attention to fortifications, and had especially "built towers," both at Jerusalem and in other parts of Judæa (2 Chron. xxvi. 9, 10; xxvii. 4). Isaiah means to pour contempt on these indications of "trust in an arm of flesh," and to say that they will be of no avail when the time of calamity arrives. **Every fenced wall.** "On the *wall* of Ophel" Jotham had "built much" (2 Chron. xxvii. 3). Hosea (viii. 14) and Micah (iv. 11) also notice the trust of Judah in her fortresses, and threaten their destruction.

Ver. 16.—**All the ships of Tarshish.** "Ships of Tarshish" meant originally "ships built to sail to Tarshish;" but was used by the later writers for ships of a certain class or size (1 Kings xxii. 48; Ps. xlviii. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 25). Tarshish was Tartessus, in Spain, and voyages thither were regarded as long and dangerous (Herod., i. 163). Consequently, the ships which were built for the Tartessian trade were of unusual size and strength. Uzziah had "built [*i.e.* rebuilt] Elath," in the eastern arm of the Red Sea, early in his reign (2 Kings xiv. 22), and no doubt maintained a fleet there, as Jehoshaphat had done (1 Kings xxii. 48). Elath remained in the possession of the Jews till the reign of Ahaz, when it was taken by Rezin, and restored to Edom (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on 2 Kings xvi. 6). **Upon all pleasant pictures**; Revised Version, *all pleasant imagery*. The exact word here translated "pictures" does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament; but a cognate word is not uncommon. From the passages in which this cognate word occurs (especially Lev. xxvi. 1; Numb. xxxiii. 52; Prov. xxv. 11; Ezek. viii. 12), it is concluded that works of art, of some sort or other, are intended. More than this can scarcely be determined. Dr. Kay thinks the term to include "sculptures and fresco-paintings." Mr. Cheyne translates "all delightful works of imagery." The sentiment is that the judgment of God will fall on the most valued contents of palaces and grand houses, no less than upon the forests and the mountains, the fortified places, and the national navy. *All* will be involved in one sweeping destruction.

Ver. 17.—**The loftiness of man.** This verse interrupts the sequence of the thoughts somewhat awkwardly. It is a sort of refrain (see ver. 11); and for the use of refrains in Hebrew poetry, see Exod. xv. 1, 21; Ps. cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31), and perhaps comes in for rhythmical reasons, to the detriment of the sense.

Ver. 18.—**And the idols he shall utterly abolish**; rather, *and the idols shall utterly pass away*. While the visitation shall fall only partially on the other objects precious to Israel—the cedars, the oaks, the terraced mountains and hills, the strongholds, the ships, and the works of art—the idols shall be wholly swept away by it. It is impossible to say what visitation exactly was in the prophet's mind; but if we may suppose that the Babylonian captivity came within the range of the prophetic vision, we must pronounce the prediction to have received a very remarkable fulfilment in this matter, since that calamity did put an *entire* end to the idolatry of the nation.

Ver. 19.—**They shall go into the holes of the rocks**, etc. (see ver. 10, which is an exhortation to do what this verse declares will be done). On the abundant caves of Palestine, see note on the former passage. **To shake terribly the earth**; literally, *to affright the earth*. It is not said in what way he will affright it. The cognate Arabic verb has the meaning "to shake;" but it is not clear that the Hebrew one has ever this sense.

Ver. 20.—**In that day a man shall cast, etc.**

When the idols disappoint their worshippers, and prove to be unable to save them, they are treated with scorn and ignominy. The African beats his fetish on such occasions. The Israelites would fling theirs to the moles and the bats. **Idols of silver . . . idols of gold** (comp. Exod. xx. 23; Ps. cxv. 4; cxxxv. 15; ch. xxx. 22; xxxi. 7; Hos. viii. 4; xiii. 2). A passage of Habakkuk (ii. 19) shows that sometimes the main bulk of the idol was of stone, which was overlaid with a coating of one or other of the two precious metals; but it would seem that ordinarily the entire image was either of gold or silver (comp. Exod. xxxii. 4, 24; 1 Kings xii. 28). No doubt it was thought that the god worshipped through the image was more honoured, and therefore better pleased, by the more costly material. **Which they made** each one for himself; rather, *which they* (*i.e.* the manufacturers) *have made for him.* Idol-making was a trade, as we see by the Acts of the Apostles (xix. 24—27). **To the moles**; literally, *to the dig-holes.* The metaphor must not be pressed. They would throw the idols into holes and corners, pits and caverns, where moles and bats might be expected to be the only visitants. Some idea of the *blindness* implied in any regard for idols may have prompted the imagery.

Ver. 21.—**To go into**; or, *as they go into*; i.e. "as they make their escape, they shall fling the idols away." **The clefts of the rocks** (comp. Exod. xxxiii. 22, the only other passage of Scripture where the word occurs). **The tops of the ragged rocks**; rather, *the rents*, or *crevices.* The idea of hiding themselves from the awful majesty of God is kept up throughout (cf. vers. 10 and 19; and see also Luke xxiii. 30).

Ver. 22.—**Cease ye from man.** This verse is regarded by many as a late marginal note, which has accidentally crept into the text (Diestel, Studer, Cheyne). It is omitted in the Septuagint, and interrupts the sequence of ch. iii. on ch. ii. somewhat awkwardly. If retained, it must be regarded as an appeal to Israel on the part of the prophet to give up their trust in man, whence had flowed all their other errors. **Whose breath is in his nostrils**; i.e. "whose life is a mere breath; who, if he ceases to breathe, ceases to live." **For wherein is he to be accounted of?** or, *for of what account is he?* Surely, of no account at all.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Hope and fear to be both called out as motives by the preacher.* Already in the first chapter Isaiah has appealed to both motives, and while for the most part denouncing Israel's sins, and declaring their coming punishment, has taken care to intersperse among these warnings announcements of a more cheerful character (see particularly vers. 9, 19, and 25—27). Now, being about to devote almost two whole chapters to denunciations, he prefaces them with one of the most glorious and joy-inspiring of all his prophecies, thus setting forth a light which not all the gloom of the succeeding sections can wholly obscure, but which casts some portion of its radiance into their darkest places. The reasons for thus intermingling light and darkness, joy and sorrow, warning and promise, would seem to be—

I. ON ACCOUNT OF THE INTERMIXTURE OF GOOD AND EVIL IN THE WORLD. Tares are always mingled with the good seed. In no nation, in no state of society, is the whole mass utterly corrupt. There is always "a remnant" (ch. i. 9). Nay, more—in no man is the character wholly evil, absolutely without redeeming points, altogether wicked. The preacher has to take care lest he "break the bruised reed," or "quench the smoking flax" (Matt. xii. 20). He must tenderly nurture what there is of good in a corrupt society or character; and this can only be done by comforting announcements, cheerful views, words of promise. On the other hand, never is there any state of society or human character without some defilement of evil, some darker shades, some blemishes (to say the least) and imperfections. Never, therefore, can the preacher dispense with the motive of fear. Never must he give himself up wholly to "speaking smooth things," else will he assuredly "prophesy deceits" (ch. xxx. 10).

II. ON ACCOUNT OF THE DOUBLE DANGER OF DESPAIR ON THE ONE HAND, AND OVER-CONFIDENCE ON THE OTHER. If all that is preached is denunciation of sin, declaration of God's wrath against sinners, and threatenings of his vengeance, the soul may be made sad whom God has not made sad—the timid may be scared, and the penitent "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Cor. ii. 7). Nay, absolute despair may be produced, and the soul lost which we sought merely to rouse. To prevent such a result, it is needful constantly to set forth, not only God's judgments, but his mercies; not only his wrath,

but his loving-kindness. On the other hand, if these alone are set forth, if his justice is ignored, if the severity of his judgments upon sinners is concealed, a feeling of over-confidence is apt to be produced, and then carelessness and general laxity of life follow. The wise preacher will steer clear of both dangers, will avoid alike Scylla and Charybdis. He will make his appeal in all cases to both motives, but will dwell upon the one or upon the other, as the circumstances of the case require. If he has reason to suspect over-confidence, which is the more usual peril, he will enlarge on the "terrors of the Lord;" if, on the contrary, he has to deal with tender consciences and souls too timid and distrustful, he will choose topics of a cheerful character, and make his comfortable assurances preponderate over his warnings.

Vers. 6—8.—*National judgments the result of national sins.* God's dealings with Israel are to be viewed as a pattern of his dealings with nations generally. He has not two standards of right and wrong, or two rules of action under like circumstances. He is "no respecter of persons." As he dealt with his own peculiar people, so will he deal, so has he always dealt, with the other nations of the world.

I. EVERY NATION HAS ITS PROBATION. God proved Israel during the space of above seven hundred years by the laws which he gave them, and the circumstances in which he caused them to be placed (Exod. xv. 25; xvi. 4; xx. 20; Deut. viii. 2, 16; Judg. ii. 22; iii. 1, 4, etc.). He chastened them by foreign enemies, comforted them by deliverances, warned them by his prophets, afflicted them by famine and pestilence, gave them "times of refreshing." So long as there was any hope of their repentance and reformation, he bore with them, forgave their transgressions, prolonged their time of trial, "destroyed them not." It was only after all the resources of his mercy had been exhausted, and there was "no remedy" left (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16), that the destruction fell, and the nation ceased to exist. And so it was with the other nations of the earth. God raised them up, set each a work to do, gave them laws, if not by revelation, at any rate through their conscience, and proceeded to "prove them," whether they would work his will or no. Each fell in its turn because it rebelled against God, and persisted in its rebellion, until God could suffer it no more. (See the example of Assyria in ch. x. 5—19.)

II. THE PROBATION IS CARRIED ON PARTLY BY THE BESTOWAL OF FAVOURS. Peace, prosperity, good seasons and rich harvests, a succession of capable monarchs or ministers, and, again, success in war, victories, conquests, and the wealth that sometimes flows in through conquests, are, all of them, blessings which God bestows on nations with the object of trying them. Will they be thankful? Will they make a good use of the favours granted them? Will they maintain their equanimity, and not, like Assyria, be unduly puffed up? The discipline of prosperity is exceedingly trying; and under it nations almost invariably wax wanton and proud. Israel was thus tried in the times of David and Solomon, and also under Uzziah and Jotham (2 Chron. xxvi. 6—16; xxvii. 3—6). Assyria underwent the probation for many centuries, from the time of the king contemporary with Ahab to the great blow received under Sennacherib. Egypt in early days, and Rome in later ones, had even longer periods of unmixed prosperity, and became proportionally "lifted up." It is rarely, indeed, that we find any nation improve under this kind of probation. Almost invariably there is a rapid change for the worse.

III. THE PROBATION IS FURTHER CARRIED ON BY THE INFLICTION OF JUDGMENTS. God has many arrows in his quiver, many plagues whereby he can punish nations, as he showed in Egypt (Exod. vii.—xii.); but *three* of these stand out from the rest as the especial instruments of his wrath—the *sword*, *famine*, and *pestilence*. (See 2 Sam. xxiv. 13; 1 Chron. xxi. 12; Ezek. xxxiv. 17. In Ezek. xiv. 12—21, "four sore judgments" are mentioned; but "the noisome beast" is clearly not on a par with the other three.) On the employment of the *sword* to chastise Israel, see Exod. xxii. 24; Lev. xxvi. 17—33; Judg. iii. 8, 12; iv. 2; vi. 1; xiii. 1; 2 Kings xvii. 20; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17; of *famine*, see Lev. xxvi. 19, 20, 26—29; Deut. xxviii. 22—24; 1 Kings xviii. 1—18; Joel i. 4—20; ii. 3—11; of *pestilence*, see Numb. xvi. 46—49; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15; Ezek. xiv. 19; xxxviii. 22. Of these three, famine and pestilence are the minor scourges, and are employed to warn, to terrify, to arouse; war has sometimes the same object, but is especially used to destroy. War destroyed Assyria (Nah. iii. 2—15),

Babylon (Jer. l. 2—37; li. 1—58; Dan. v. 30, 31), Media (Herod., i. 127, 128), Egypt (ibid., iii. 11—13), Persia (Dan. viii. 3—7, 20, 21), Greece, Rome. War is still God's last, most terrible scourge, and will remain such until the happy time, described by Isaiah in vers. 2—4, arrives.

Vers. 12—22.—*The terrors of the day of the Lord.* Every visitation of man by God is typical of his coming to judgment. "That day" is, in its deepest and truest sense, the day whereon Christ shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead. Of "*that day* and that hour knoweth no man" (Matt. xxiv. 36); and the terror is increased by the mystery. The prophet sees God descend to judge Israel. The particular features are local; but through them may be discerned without much difficulty the characteristics which are recurrent, and which belong especially to the last and great day, viz.—

I. ABASEMENT OF THE PROUD. Earthly distinctions come to nought when the earth itself comes to an end. Rank, titles, dignities, fail. The "mean man" and the "great man" (ver. 9), the highest and the lowest in earthly rank, are upon a par, when all have to appear before their Judge. And spiritual pride is equally brought low. None but must then feel himself a miserable sinner, a suppliant for mercy at God's feet, with hope only through the merits and intercession of the incarnate Son. "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (ver. 17).

II. DESTRUCTION OF THE GRANDEST OF HUMAN WORKS. Towers, walls, palaces, are shattered and overturned at the great seasons of national judgments, and will fall with a crash everywhere at the final judgment-day. The great navies of the world will perish in the "fervent heat;" the works of art, the "pleasant pictures," and all the "delightful works of imagery," will shrivel like parchment scrolls. The accumulated civilization of millennia will be brought to nought. Egypt's pyramids and temples, Persia's palaces, Greece's lovely fanes, Rome's amphitheatres, Christendom's magnificent cathedrals,—all will totter to their base and be overthrown. Nothing will stand that human skill, contrivance, energy, has constructed; all will disappear, and—

> "Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
> Leave not a wrack behind."

III. DESTRUCTION OF GRAND OBJECTS IN NATURE. The taint of man's sin has passed upon nature itself. Pride and vanity have employed natural products for self-glorification; the precious metals have been prostituted to sinful uses; selfishness has turned natural beauties into private property, and either made a gain of them, or jealously secluded them from the intrusion of ordinary humanity. Therefore Nature, as she now is, has become unfit for the habitation of man in his regenerate condition; and "the first earth" has to "pass away," and to be succeeded by the "new heaven and new earth" of the Apocalyptic vision (Rev. xxi. 1). What the exact amount of change will be, we do not know. Many features of the existing earth may remain—pure snowy summits that the foot of man has never trod; blue glacier caves that have escaped his prying eyes; deep forest glades preserved from the desecration of his presence by thorny jungle or impenetrable wealth of undergrowth; but much of that with which man is most familiar will disappear—perhaps all that could recall acts or thoughts of sin—and the "new heaven and new earth," that God will create, will to such an extent supersede the old, that "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (ch. lxv. 17).

IV. GENERAL ALARM, ESPECIALLY OF THE SINNER AND THE WORLDLY. They of Israel fled into "the holes of the rocks, and the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty" (ver. 19). At the last day, "men shall say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 30); "Hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16). The brightness of his presence will be intolerable to those who have "loved darkness rather than light;" and they will desire, at any rate, to flee from it. Alas! flight will be impossible, concealment will be impossible; no rocks will offer hiding-places to the ungodly from the presence of God. One only refuge is possible; but to that men must have fled before, with the heartfelt, earnest cry—

> "Rock of ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee!"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The golden age.* I. THE BLESSED OR GOLDEN AGE A SUBJECT OF EARLY PROPHECY. It is believed that we have in these verses a very ancient oracle, first delivered by the earlier prophet Joel (see Joel iii. 10), and from him repeated by Isaiah and Micah (iv. 1—4). An eternal hopefulness lived in the heart of the great prophets, like a light shining in a dark place, amidst all the scenes of national sin and depression. What has been said of true poetry is to be said of prophecy—it is the "light that never shone on sea or shore; the inspiration and the poet's dream."

II. A REVIVAL OF RELIGION WILL USHER IN THE GOLDEN AGE. The mountains were earliest seats of Divine worship, both amongst Jews and Gentiles. One of the seats of the great god of the Greeks, Mount Lycæos in Arcadia, commanded, Pausanias tells us, a view over nearly the whole Peloponnese. Zion was a small and lowly mount, but it is to become a peak that shall overtop all mountains, the "joy of the whole earth" (Ps. xlviii. 2), unrivalled in the majesty of its Divine associations (Ps. lxviii. 16). The Gentiles will make pilgrimages to this holy mountain. All this poetically describes the commanding influence of true religion. 1. The revival of religion means the *revival of morality.* When the conscience is really awakened, the inquiry will ever be—What must we do? What are the ways and paths of God? What are the principles of a true, a just, and a blessed life? 2. It means *social unity.* In the vision the Gentiles are seen converging with the Jews to one point—to Zion. The more deep religion is, the more do men feel that truth is but one, thought one, spiritual worship one. The love of God solves all differences in itself. 3. True religion is a self-diffusive power. It goes forth like light, like heat, like a fame and rumour insensibly stealing through the air.

III. JUSTICE AND PEACE WILL BE THE EFFECTS OF TRUE RELIGION. We can clearly see that it is so from the course of history. With the progress of Christianity, the administration of justice within the sphere of each nation has become milder, because more thoughtful, more respectful of the value of the individual life. Not only so, the idea of international justice has gained ground. Whatever a certain school of politicians may say, conscience does gain ground in the dealings of nation with nation. Wrong cannot be done to the weak without censure. Nations as well as individuals are more alive to the voice of public opinion, and more sensible of shame. In our own time, "justice" has again and again been the watchword of our politics, and has gained attention and overcome the clamours of the bellicose and the sneers of the cynical. Let us be thankful for these things. Best of all, peace and its occupations replace war and its waste, as true religion prevails. In this beautiful picture, or slight sketch of a picture, we see the soldier going back to his fields, that he may turn the murderous steel into the hoe, the share, the pruning-knife, while the arsenals and military schools are closed (see the touch added by Micah iv. 4; cf. Ps. xlvi. 9; Hos. ii. 20; Zech. ix. 10). It is the picture of an ideal and a future, not yet nor soon perhaps to be converted into an actual present, except in the delightful world of holy dreams which makes the best of our life. But for every one who works and lives in the true Christian spirit, the picture ever more nearly tends to coincide with the reality.

IV. REFLECTIONS OF THIS PROPHECY AMONG THE GENTILES. Doubtless a large collection might be made of passages of similar scope from the lore of other nations. Best known are those from the Roman poets. Virgil, like Joel (iii. 10), reverses the imagery. When right and wrong are confused, wars prevail and all manner of crimes. The plough receives no honour; the fields run to weeds, because the farmers have gone to serve as soldiers, and the curved sickles are turned into the rigid sword ('Georg.,' i. 506, *sqq.*). So Ovid: in time of war the sword is apter than the plough; the toiling ox gives way to the war-horse, while hoes and rakes are turned into javelins ('Fast.,' i. 697, *sqq.*). He further sketches the picture of peace bringing back the ox to the yoke, and the seed to the ploughed land. For "Peace nourishes Ceres, and Ceres is the foster-child of Peace." We must reserve the further pictures of the perfection of the golden age in the Gentile poets until we come to ch. xi. In their way they, too, recognized that so happy a state of things could only be brought about by religion—by the returning of men to obedience to Divine laws.

V. MODERN LESSONS. Let us "come and walk in the light of the Eternal." In that light the hideousness of war and of the national discords which lead to it are clearly seen. No sound understanding can ever look upon war as other than an occasional and dread necessity. Preaching against war may do a certain good. But practically to walk in the light and lead others to it is better. All sides of the subject need to be better understood by the popular mind. The most serious fallacies prevail. Were the energies now employed in preparing for and carrying on war devoted to exploring, breaking up, and cultivating new regions, how truly blessed the result! In fighting with the stubbornness of nature man may find an outlet for all his pugnacious energy. The poets should sanctify their art to glorifying the ideals of peace rather than those of war. None can read these lines without being enkindled—

> "Ah, when shall all men's good
> Be each man's rule, and universal peace
> Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
> Thro' all the circle of the golden year?"
>
> (Tennyson.)

And let every earnest toiler in whatever sphere for the good of man, for the glory of God, take these words to heart—

> "Unto him who works, and feels he works,
> This same grand year is ever at the doors."
>
> J.

Vers. 5—10.—*Purgation by judgment.* The blessed age cannot yet come in. If we suppose the prophet to have been reading the previous oracle as a sabbath lesson out of the elder prophet Joel's scroll, he adds the exhortation, "Let us walk in the light of Jehovah!" Then a sudden pause. For he calls to mind the present corrupt condition of the nation. They cannot pass over to that new and happy condition of things as they now are. Peace can only be the fruit of righteousness. God cannot impart blessings for which the heart makes no room.

I. THE REASONS OF DIVINE REJECTION. The nation's practices and fashions are inconsistent with the religion of Jehovah. 1. *Wizardry, magic, soothsaying, and augury prevail.* These are distinctly heathen, Philistine, practices. The Law repudiated every kind of magic (Lev. xix. 26; Exod. xxii. 17). Such arts are described under various names in Deut. xviii. 10, 11. The principle was in every case the same—the attempt to gratify human curiosity and desire by unlawful means. Modern "spiritualism" springs from the same root. The path of true science is above-ground and full of light; that of false science is subterranean and dark. The methods of sound knowledge may be explained to all. The worker of good comes to the light, and hates occult procedure which can give no account of itself. The magical spirit still works against true Christianity, which is the "light of the Eternal." Christian ministers become magicians if they teach that changes can be wrought or blessings secured by the mere administration of sacraments; or by the mere repetition of a formula, such as "I do believe, I will believe;" or by the artificial putting on of a particular frame of mind. Obedience, not the mimicry of it, purity, not the representation of it, is required by God. 2. *Ill-gotten wealth and luxury.* The people were immoderately money-loving. Like Tyre, they heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets (Zech. ix. 3).

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

The excess of accumulation ever does mean the waste of manhood. A nation is only healthy when the vigour of its masculine intellect goes to promote the ulterior ends of existence. Those ends are spiritual. Wealth should be prized for the sake of leisure, and leisure for the sake of culture. When leisure hangs heavy on the business man's hands, it is a sign that he has been overtrained in one direction. 'Tis a sad failure to be found fit only for grinding at the money-making mill. Such a man cannot enjoy wealth when he has got it. We need a larger conception of the true conduct of life.

Men often lose more morally in their rest-time than they can recover in their work-time. No unjust trading can produce real prosperity. England has gained by every act of righteous policy, such as the abolition of the corn-laws, the slave-trade. Whatever is gain to the health of the national conscience is permanent. Every just act is a tonic to the soul. 3. *They are full of the materials for war.* Their reliance is on horses and chariots. When a nation places confidence on physical force only, it is another symptom of moral enervation. How often has this been seen in history! The very existence of a great armed force is a constant provocative to war. It breeds a martial imagination and a bellicose spirit. National jealousies are roused, and the slightest occasion may set a continent aflame. The people must learn that Jehovah delights not in the legs of men, *i.e.* in serried battalions, and that in proportion as they lean on armies they are faithless to God. They must learn to say, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy" (Hos. xiv. 3). 4. *They are full of idols.* This is perhaps the worst feature of their state. The prohibition of idols is grounded in the nature of our thought. The idol defines and narrows what ought to be left indefinable. The Phœnician and other idols introduced into Israel brought down the Divine to the forms and dimensions of the human being, and all human passions the most sensuous could be projected upon them. And when man sees only his idealized self before him in the sculptor's work, he falls to self-adoration. It was quite otherwise with the grand music and religious poetry of the prophets and psalmists. Lofty poetic images by their very vagueness and suggestiveness lead the mind to the truth beyond and behind them. High music and poesy we ever need in worship; but too definite forms fetter the flight of the devout imagination. In general idolatry means self-love, and must ever be antagonistic to pure religion. "Thus man lowers himself, becomes unworthy to appear before Jehovah, and belong to his people." And judgment is inevitable; there can be no escape from it now!

II. TERROR AT THE APPROACH OF THE JUDGE. "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, fleeing before Jehovah's terror, and the splendour of his majesty." The soul living in falsehood as its element shrinks away from the coming truth which must annihilate it. Men's fears represent to them at last their follies and their sins.

> "Like bats and vermin hurrying from the sudden light,
> Our sordid vices far from God would take their flight."

The eyes that were not cast down in prayer, the mien of profane impudence that laughed at Heaven, are now shrivelled, prone in the dust now before the lonely sublimity of the eternal Holiness. Those who made nought of God must learn that nought can exist which does not exist in God.

> "At last we hear a voice upon the slope
> Cry to the summit, Is there any hope?
> To which an answer peals from that high land,
> But in a tongue no man can understand;
> And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn,
> God makes himself an awful rose of dawn."
>
> J.

Vers. 12—22.—*The day of judgment.* Here follows a grand picture, in which a few simple thoughts are set.

I. THE DAY OF JEHOVAH. This stands for any and every epoch of clearer light which reveals the relative worth of things. False estimates of life and its objects have become by custom fixed. The imagination has been under a delusion. A false idea of greatness and goodness has become so fixed that nothing but a revolution will subvert it. The criticism of words may be defied; but the criticism of facts, of results,—against this there is no appeal. There is no reversal of the judgment of events. A great day of judgment was, for example, the French Revolution of a century ago. The falsehood of generations was then expiated in blood. Social institutions which were bad, inhuman, yet which those who had grown up in them regarded as impossible to alter, were effaced in that terrible outpouring of the wrath of God. The sense amidst great wrong that the

judgment of God cannot long be delayed, is expressed in the common saying, "Things must take a turn before long." In the life of the individual, every stopping-point or turning-point at which a false way of life terminates, may be viewed as a day of judgment and a day of Jehovah.

II. THE DAY BRINGS WITH IT A SHOCK TO HUMAN IMAGINATION. The prophet piles up images to represent the reversal of all human ideals of greatness and loftiness. The gigantic trees of Lebanon and Bashan, the mountains and hills, the towers and the high ramparts, the tall ships sailing Tarshish-wards (Ps. xlviii. 8), the turrets of villas and houses of pleasure, draw down upon them the violence of the storm. The vast and lofty in nature and in works of art are not of more value in the eyes of God than the small and lowly. They are hints of the greatness of the spirit, and if we give such objects an independent greatness, we are suffering from an illusion. The greatness and the beauty are in the seeing mind. There is not so much to be seen of the work of God in a mountain as in a moth. "Life apparent in the smallest midge is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self." The palaces, the streets of a great city, are signs of the human soul and its greatness, but not the truest signs. It is a common error to look for the tokens of a people's greatness in their buildings and mechanical achievements. But from what source does material creation and production come? That is the ultimate question. Our works of art are works of the flesh and of pride, or works of the spirit wrought in humility and the love of truth. A few such works in plastic stuff of stone, or on canvas, or in poetic words, endure through all change. That which is untrue must fall sooner or later beneath the criticism of God and be exposed. And in the downfall of human works the eternal God is again manifested in his supreme greatness and glory. It is our own false imaginations which hide him from us.

III. THE ABANDONMENT OF THE IDOLS. For the idols cannot help their worshippers, who must run to hide themselves. Yet at first they cling to them. But soon in alarm they cast them away into any corner, any refuse-heap, any filthy haunt of bats and moles. "To cast to the bats" is as proverbial an expression in the East for throwing clean away as rejected rubbish, as "throwing to the dogs" with us. There comes a time when men will be willing to get rid of their most precious objects so that they may but save themselves. A secret terror haunts the false conscience, which in moments of clear revelation of truth rises to an acme and becomes a panic. The true heart longs for more of God's light, the false can only exist behind an artificial veil or screen. In every time larger light is appearing, truths for the conduct of life are coming into currency; in short, the Divine Critic of our life is making his censure felt. Alas for those who rush into any cave at hand, plunge into obscurantism rather than face the worst, which thus faced will prove the best!

IV. THE MORAL. "Cease ye from man." If in any such day of revelation all the proud ideals of human society may be discovered false, and cast aside as worthless; if the time of revelation shows that we have been resting upon rotten shams; if we have an uneasy consciousness that it is always so;—how vain is all confidence in human wit and work! The bitter words seem to cast contempt upon every species of boast and satisfaction. A poet of our time has written a great work to show that "our human speech is nought, our human testimony false, our fame and human estimation words and wind" (Browning, 'Ring and Book'). But how *can* we cease from man? We can only know the true and the eternal through some form of human experience. The answer is—Man merely as man, an independent fact, is nought; he and all his pass away. In living for himself as if there were no truth, no good, beyond, he becomes a lie. If we see man only we see the false; if God working in and through man and his history, we find the true in the false. Working through the false shows of sense, we may reach the spirit of things, the mind of God. We leave our hold on the fugitive human fact, lse if we try to stereotype it, that we may plant our foot on the constant. The Divine

> "Truth is forced
> To manifest itself through falsehood; whence divorced
> By the excepted eye, at the rare season, for
> The happy moment, truth instructs us to abhor
> The false, and prize the true, obtainable thereby."

J.

Ver. 3.—*Real religious revival.* "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." Here is the tide of national feeling, no longer on the ebb, but on the flow. God is "to teach them his ways, and they are to walk in his paths;" for they have found out that pleasure gained by sin is peace bartered. Elevation of the truest kind is to be theirs now. This is the image of their uplifted state. They are to go up to the mountain of the Lord's house—the consecrated height of holiness and peace.

I. THERE IS SPONTANEITY OF LIFE. "Come, let us go." It is no mere fashion, or custom, or compulsion of obedience. Life always says, "Come." I read *delight* here. For what we enjoy we invite others to see. When we ascend to the mountain-top, and see the winding river, like a streak of silver, and the village-dotted plains, we cry "Come!" to others, that they too may delight in the loveliness of the scene. So an earnest Christian not only says "Come!" because of the urgency of the salvation, but also because of the beauty and blessedness of religion. "Oh taste and see," he says, "that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

II. THERE IS SACRED FELLOWSHIP. "Let us go up." For religion is intensified in its experiences by mutual faith and joy. The interaction of mind on mind and heart upon heart in a great congregation is wonderful. "Let us go up." And beautiful were those spectacles in Hebrew history, when the pilgrims went to tabernacle or temple. "Thither the tribes go up." The festal caravans met each other from distant parts, as they merged at last into one common road to time-beloved Jerusalem. At the Feasts of Pentecost and Passover, as in the days of our Saviour, the interest felt in these upgoings to Jerusalem was both human and Divine. Old friends met again, whilst youths and maidens set eyes for the first time on the city and temple of their fathers. On their way they sang the songs of Zion, till in noblest worship the gathered tribes lifted up their praise to the Lord God of Israel.

III. THERE IS SUBLIME PROPHECY. "Many shall go." Yes, and in these Christian days, Greek and Jew, bond and free, have been united in one common song of deliverance. Missionary societies have founded Churches and schools on well-nigh every shore. "Many shall come." Verily, unto Christ shall the gathering of the people be. "All nations shall call him blessed." How verified the words have been! "For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*The promised future: a missionary sermon.* I. THAT DIVINE TRUTH WILL KNOW A TIME OF GLORIOUS ELEVATION. The "last days" (ver. 2) may be distant days, may be "afar off" still, but *they are coming;* we are steadily advancing to them. The "mountain of the Lord's house" may be low down to-day, but it will rise; it may be but as a hill of sacred truth obscured among the mountains of error. But God's high purpose shall surely be fulfilled in time; the day will dawn when they who gaze upon the spiritual scenery of the world will see Zion lifting up its head far and high above all those little hills into which the proud peaks of falsehood will have diminished. There is a power that can raise the hills and that can "thresh the mountains" (ch. xli. 15).

II. THAT ITS POWER SHALL HAVE THE WIDEST POSSIBLE EXTENSION. "All nations shall flow unto it." The river of human thought, faith, hope, shall set in a strong current to this high mountain. Divine truth shall not only gain a formal triumph over the idolatries, superstitions, infidelities of the world, but human hearts everywhere will rejoice in its salvation.

III. THAT ONE SIGN OF ITS EXALTATION AND EXTENSION WILL BE A PREVALENT SPIRIT OF RELIGIOUS INQUIRY. (Ver. 3.) Men will be convinced of the hollowness of their old faiths; of the unsatisfying character of their present pleasures; of the insufficiency of the light in which they have been walking to lead them into wisdom and blessedness. And they will turn to the one and only source of illumination and joy; they will say, "Let us go up," etc. (ver. 3). The hungry heart will cry out for the Bread of life; the thirsting soul will pant for the living streams. When men have found—and are they not finding more and more largely?—that the errors into which they have wandered are but ashes in their mouth, they will seek and they will accept the bountiful provision which awaits them in the "Father's house," in the gospel of the grace of God.

IV. THAT ONE RESULT OF IT WILL BE THE PREVALENCE OF THE SPIRIT AND OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF PEACE. (Ver. 4.) The love of war, the institutions of war, the readiness to have recourse to war, the pride and glory in military achievements which even Christian nations are not ashamed to own,—this will disappear as the will of God takes its due, its exalted place among mankind. The sword will give place to the ploughshare, not only in the use of the nation's metal, but in the honour and estimation of the people's mind. And instead of a country wasting its strength and lavishing its energy in the cultivation of the science and in the construction of the enginery of war, it will devote its mental power to the acquisition of those arts which heal and bless and raise.

V. THAT ONE CONTRIBUTION TO ITS COMING WILL BE FOUND IN OUR OWN FAITHFULNESS. (Ver. 5.) If we would be sure of the dawn of this blessed future, let us take our part, however humble it may be, in the work of enlightenment; let *us* walk in the light of the Lord. It is the critical and the censorious whose faith fails them; it is they who have no bright visions of a coming day of glory: they are only conscious of the clouds, and see no light in the far horizon. But those who study the will of God as revealed in his Word, who make haste to keep his commandments, who live the Master's life, and illustrate his Word by deeds of helpfulness and love,—it is they who have the assurance in their hearts that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established," that the day will come when truth will be crowned, and "universal peace" shall

> "Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
> And like a lane of beams athwart the sea,
> Thro' all the circle of the golden year."

For it is

> "Unto him who works, and feels he works,
> This same grand year is ever at the doors."

C.

Ver. 5.—*The wisdom of walking in the light.* The prophet inserts a parenthesis which evidently expresses the deepest and strongest feelings of his heart. He is oppressed with a sense of the folly of those who deliberately go astray in the darkness, when they might walk on in the light of Divine truth toward the goal of human blessedness; hence his fervent exclamation, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us," etc.

I. THE TRUTH OF GOD THE LIGHT OF THE HUMAN SOUL. Light is "that which makes manifest" (see Eph. v. 13). And as the sunshine makes clear to us our own persons, shows us all surrounding nature, and enables us to find our way to the objects of our desire, so the truth of God (1) enlightens us as to our own selves, revealing our spiritual nature and our actual character; (2) shows us the relation in which we stand to our fellows and to our Divine Maker, revealing to us human life and human destiny; and (3) enables us to walk in the way of eternal life, *becoming* that which pleases God, and *doing* that which is right and good in his sight.

II. THE SUPREME WISDOM OF WALKING IN ITS LIGHT. Well may the man of God exclaim with even passionate earnestness, "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." For: 1. It is the one *right* course to take; any other must be one of error and of sin. 2. It is the path of progress, leading up to heights of strength, prosperity, sanctity. 3. It is the way to abiding joy; other paths, though they may open temptingly enough and may promise keen delights, will conduct ultimately to sorrow, shame, and death. This way, in which the light of the Lord leads us, may be entered upon with spiritual struggle (Luke xiii. 24), may be attended with much self-denial (Matt. xvi. 24); but it is a path of purest and noblest joy (Rom. v. 11; Phil. iii. 1; iv. 4; 1 Pet. iv. 13), and it ends in everlasting glory (1 Pet. i. 3, 4).—C.

Vers. 6—21.—*Retribution and its results.* In this noble prophetic passage, as charged with poetic grandeur as it is full of religious zeal, we have our thought directed to—

I. TWO HEINOUS SINS WHICH BELONG TO EVERY AGE AND CLASS. They are these: 1. *Disobedience.* The divination to which reference is made (ver. 6) is expressly prohibited in the Law (Deut. xviii. 10—12); alliance with strangers (ver. 6) is also

forbidden (Exod. xxxiv. 12; Deut. vii. 2); the multiplication of silver and gold and of horses (ver. 7), however unobjectionable it may seem to us, was disallowed to the Hebrew nation (Deut. xvii. 16, 17). The Jews would be under strong temptation to disregard these prohibitions; many of the lower ambitions of our nature would urge them to transgression. But the clear, unmistakable "Law of the Lord" pronounced against these things. And as every fact, both of a brighter and a darker kind, admonished them "to obey the voice of the Lord their God," they were "verily guilty" in their disobedience. God requires of men, of every age and land, that they should obey him. He will accept nothing of any kind as a substitute (1 Sam. xv. 22; Matt. vii. 21). Our ignorance of his purpose in commanding is no excuse for our disregard of his will. How can such little children as we are expect to fathom the wisdom of the Infinite Father? When we set our poor judgment against his perfect knowledge, our mistaken wishes against his holy will, we fall into the most serious sin. Our obedience is to be intelligent and not mechanical, cheerful and not grudging, instant and not tardy, or it will *not be* obedience at all. 2. *Idolatry.* This sin, so grievous in the sight of God, is found in one of three forms. (1) In its most gross and degrading form, as in Judæa at this period (vers. 8, 9), when both the "mean" and the "great" prostrated themselves before the image made with hands; or (2) in the less gross but still degrading form of superstition in "Christian" rites; or (3) in that which constitutes its essence, viz. the giving to the creature the thought, the affection, the energy, which are due to the Creator. In this last form we are all under condemnation. We withhold from him whose we are and to whom we owe ourselves and all we have, the devotion and the tribute which we reserve for our neighbours or expend upon ourselves. This is essentially idolatrous.

II. DIVINE RETRIBUTION. Here are four features of it. 1. It begins in the withdrawal of Divine favour. "God forsakes his people" (ver. 6). He ceases to make the light of his countenance fall on them; their prosperity wanes, their joy diminishes, their power declines. 2. It may well be dreaded as certain to arrive in time. "Therefore thou wilt not forgive them" (ver. 9). God cannot and will not pardon the impenitent, and those who are disobedient or idolatrous may count on the coming of his judgments as the most certain of all future things. 3. It is such that the boldest may well shrink from it. "Enter into the rock, and hide thee . . . for fear of the Lord," etc. (vers. 10, 19). (1) When God makes the sins of a man's life to bring forth their natural and fitting fruits (intemperance, dissoluteness, dishonesty, etc., working themselves out in penury, disease, contempt, etc.); (2) when God causes special enormities to be followed by extraordinary calamities; or (3) when he makes the hardened sinner to confront death, judgment, and eternity;—then does he come as One who is in "the glory of his majesty, shaking terribly the earth;" then does he manifest his will and his power in such wise that the boldest and most fearless may well shrink and shudder at his appearing. However valiant sin may show itself while the righteous Lord delays to speak and strike, there is an hour coming when it will "call to the rocks to hide it, and to the hills to cover it," when it will tremble and cower at the touch of the hand of the Holy One. 4. It is that which nothing can escape. (1) *No man.* "The day of the Lord . . . every one that is proud," etc. (ver. 12); not only the humble, but the haughty; not the defenceless only, but the strong and well fortified, even those who think themselves most secure, will feel the keen edge of the avenging sword (ver. 17). (2) *Nothing.* The cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan, the mountains and the hills, the treasure-laden ships and the pleasant pictures and even the trusted idols,—all shall feel the blow of the mighty hand; nothing too high or too strong to be beyond its reach (vers. 13—18).

III. THE ISSUE. The end of Divine judgment is: 1. The humiliation of that which is false and evil. The idols which had been so honoured are to be cast to the moles and to the bats (ver. 20). When God appears in judgment there is a great reversal and overthrow. That which was first becomes last; that which was highest in esteem becomes the object of derision and contempt. 2. The exaltation of the Lord himself. "The Lord alone shall be exalted," etc. (ver. 17). And, though we do not gain the thought from these verses, we may add: 3. The salvation of the penitent and the faithful. There *is* one Rock in which, if we seek its gracious shelter now, we shall then be able to hide, and in whose shadow we shall be safe; "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—C.

Ver. 22.—*Trusting in man.* I. OUR STRONG TEMPTATION. We are very strongly tempted to "put our trust in man," to "make flesh our arm;" for: 1. We see signs of strength in man. And that which is visible has most influence on our human nature. "If a man loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20). In like manner we far more readily trust the man who is before us with visible signs of health, riches, power about him, than any unseen force which may really be more reliable. 2. Human affection invites trust in man. There are loving hearts around us, enclosing our spirits in the embrace of their affection; it is natural to us to respond to their kindness, and to offer them the full confidence of our souls. We love those who love us; and whom we love we trust. 3. Confidence is often directly offered to us and urged upon us. Those who wish—perhaps for their own purposes—to secure our confidence in them know how to employ successful arts to win our assurance. They virtually say to us, "Trust me, I will ensure your good, I will lead you in the path of honour, of enjoyment, of prosperity;" and it is all too likely that their blandishments or their importunity will prevail. 4. Trust in man is contagious. We find our fellows on every hand, in every circle, leaning the whole weight of their well-being upon the arm of men, confiding wholly in their friends and neighbours, risking everything on their integrity; and what others do we are tempted to do also. The frosts may have been very few and the ice may seem very thin, but many are skating on its surface, and we think that where they have gone we also may go with impunity.

II. OUR WISDOM IN ITS PRESENCE. 1. We should never trust man *absolutely.* We are to "cease from man;" he is "not to be accounted of" in such way as to be worthy of our implicit trust. Of this we may assure ourselves if we will remember: (1) *His liability to mistake.* The cleverest, the most learned, the most thoughtful, the most esteemed, are wrong in some things, are often found wrong in great and grave things; there is no man whose judgment is always sound. (2) *His spiritual insecurity.* The man who is held in highest regard may be overtaken by a storm of temptation in which even he will make shipwreck. Men have fallen on whose security their companions counted with unbounded certainty. Before the friend whom we honour above all others, there may prove to be a course which will end in spiritual declension, or even in moral degradation. The painful facts of life pierce our theories while they break our hearts. (3) *His physical fragility.* "Man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Hale, strong, capable of noble work to-day, he may be brought down to utter weakness and incapacity to-morrow; nay, before the sun goes down he may have drawn the last breath of life! 2. We should trust the only One who is trustworthy—even him who is the "Truth," who is the "Holy One," who is the "Immortal One."—C.

Ver. 3.—*The attractions of the gospel Church.* The earthly Jerusalem, which was thought of as a mountain surrounded by mountains, but superior to them all, is in the prophet's mind, and it gives form to his thought of the Gospel times—the setting up of the Christian Church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world. Christianity shall then be the "mountain of the Lord's house," or the "Lord's mountain house," exalted above all other religions, and made the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. "The prophet sees the Church permanently placed in a conspicuous position, so as to be a source of attraction to surrounding nations. To express this idea, he makes use of terms which are strictly applicable only to the local habitation of the Church under the old economy. Instead of saying, in modern phraseology, that the Church, as a society, shall become conspicuous and attract all nations, he represents the mountain upon which the temple stood as being raised and fixed above the other mountains, so as to be visible in all directions" (J. A. Alexander). T. K. Cheyne notices an "old belief in Eastern Asia that there was a mountain reaching from earth to heaven, on the summit of which was the dwelling of the gods. The prophet is, perhaps, alluding to this belief, which he recognizes as true in substance, though attached by the heathen to a wrong locality." The text may be illustrated by the custom of the Israelites to journey from all parts of the country for the yearly feasts. Keeping the figure of the prophet, we observe—

I. THE GOSPEL CHURCH IS LIKE A MOUNTAIN. Illustrate from the conspicuous position of Jerusalem, or of Safed. A mountain rises up out of the plain; so the gospel Church

is right in the midst of the world and the people. A mountain towers up above the plain, within sight of all; and so the gospel Church is such a striking and impressive thing that all eyes must be turned to it. Men cannot be blind to it; men dare not ignore it. Like the mountain, it is an indestructible fact, of which men must take account. The buildings erected for its worship are the symbols of itself; in every village, town, and city, the church tower and cathedral spire rise above the buildings of the people, well in everybody's sight. Show that however men may think to dispel the so-called *myths* that have gathered round the historic Christ, they must deal with this mountain-fact, the gospel Church exists; it must have had a source; it must have a mission at the heart of it. Surely it is the witness of the truth of Christ.

II. THE GOSPEL CHURCH IS FIGURED AS ON THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS. Other religions, other social and philanthropic schemes for the elevation of the race, may be figured as mountains. But let them all be gathered together, and it will be found that Christianity towers high above them all. Its origin, its character, its provisions, make it the most conspicuous, the most important of them all. Comparisons may be instituted (1) with man-made religions, paganism, Buddhism, etc.; and (2) with previously given Divine religions, such as patriarchism, Mosaism, etc. The points of superiority are such as these: 1. Revelation of God to man under the figure of Father. 2. Manifestation of God in the person of his Son as a fellow-man. 3. Redemption of man by the intervention of Divine love. 4. Perfect provision for the needs of man, as a spiritual being. 5. Adequate and final mastery of all man's moral foes and evils. Show that other religions touch *some* of man's needs. Christianity is at the "top of the mountains," because it reaches them all, and deals with them efficiently.

III. THE GOSPEL CHURCH ATTRACTING ALL NATIONS. They will be drawn, not forced into it. One shall tell another of it. One shall invite another to journey to it. They shall flow to it as streams flow to the sea. "There is an Eastern fable of a great mountain of lodestone, out in the middle of the sea, that attracted, to their destruction, all the ships that came near it. This mountain of the Lord's house is a great spiritual magnet, and it draws souls, not to destruction, but to everlasting life" (Dr. Edmond). Illustrate (1) from the various nations attracted by the preaching of the early Church; (2) from the power of the preached gospel in various heathen lands now; (3) from its proved fitness to meet the needs of all sinners and all sufferers. Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*War no more.* It seems that the reign of Uzziah was famous for the invention of new weapons of war (2 Chron. xxvi. 11—15). Isaiah, observing this, contrasts with it the good time coming, when righteousness rules the relations of kings and kingdoms; and when Messiah, the Prince of righteousness, and therefore Prince of peace, judges among the nations. If Christ really reigned, and held the allegiance of every man and of every nation, all disputes could be settled by arbitration; if each man, and each nation, only wants what is right and what is kind, there need be no more war. Matthew Henry well says, "The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace, so that one might reasonably have expected it should have this effect; and it would have had it if it had not been for those lusts of men from which come wars and fightings." Christianity has, in some measure, already triumphed over war and the war-spirit.

I. THE HORRORS OF WAR ARE RELIEVED. Certainly they are so far as concerns civilized and Christian nations. Compare ancient and modern warfare in respect (1) of giving no quarter; (2) of unbridled licence on taking a city; (3) of the treatment of captives; (4) of provisions for the care of the wounded; (5) of the respectful burial of the dead. "So far as the teaching of Christ has influenced international polity and law, he has been the supreme Arbitrator of their disputes." "It is undeniable that Christianity has greatly contributed to ameliorate the political condition of mankind, by diminishing the horrors of war, promoting mutual intercourse, and advancing the useful arts."

II. THE IMPLEMENTS OF WAR ARE DEVOTED TO OTHER USES. The expression, "beat their swords into ploughshares," is figurative, and what it represents is met by the fact that commerce and manufactures advance faster than the making of war-tools. Time

was when men and energies were given to the manufacture of weapons and implements of war, and when kings lived to make war. That is all past and gone. Only a small fringe of human labour is related to war material; and kings have discovered that national prosperity and national peace go together hand in hand. Contrast the life in England under the Edwards, and under Victoria. "In such states of society as that among the Hebrews, the peasantry, when summoned to the field, are obliged to provide their own weapons. When, therefore, they were poor, and material for weapons was too expensive for their resources, it would be an obvious thought to turn the ploughshare, which was thin, long, and light for such an instrument, into a sword, which was short and thick as compared with our sword. When the war was over, the change might easily be made back again. A sword would, of course, with equal facility, be changed into a ploughshare. Pruning-hooks may include anything employed in reaping or mowing; such as a sickle or scythe, as well as the long knives used for trimming vines." Show that commerce, knitting lands together by mutual interest, is a handmaid to Christianity in her work of peace.

III. THE WASTE OF TIME AND POWER IN LEARNING WAR ARE CHECKED. Illustrate from the formation of our volunteer army, the members of which give their best energies to peaceful pursuits, and only their leisure to learning the art of war. Note the growing feeling that the soldier-class is almost a useless class; that the money expended on them is a waste; and that the nation suffers by having so much of her young manhood idle, and getting into the moral mischiefs of the idle. The results we thus can recognize have been attained by the triumph of the great Christian principles, of peace, brotherhood, and care for others rather than for self. But we may not rest with any present attainments; we must witness and work for that glorious coming time, when the ideal king is to "judge among the nations," and in reliance on his wisdom and equity, the nations will refer their disputes to his decision, instead of the arbitrament of war.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Walking in the light.* That is in the path of present duty on which the light of revelation shines. The text is part of a spirited address to the Jews to avail themselves of the privileges they had. The prospects of a glorious peace-time must not keep them from fixing their thoughts on their immediate and pressing duty. It is right for us to cheer our souls by the look away to rest and heaven; but we must not lose the present opportunity in idle dreamings. The real way to win the heavenly is to live in righteousness, in truth, and in charity—to "walk in the light of the Lord." We remark, in unfolding this "light" in which we are invited to walk, that—

I. GOD GIVES LIGHT BY GIVING COMMANDMENTS. Illustrate from the great natural laws written in men's consciences and hearts. The Decalogue was in existence as unwritten law before the finger of God traced it on the tablets. Also from the ten commandments, as elaborated by Moses, and made to cover all the minutest details of a Jew's life and relations. And also from the commandments given by the Lord Jesus, and elaborated in detail by the apostles, so as to apply to all the circumstances and relations of the early Christians.

II. GOD GIVES LIGHT BY REVEALING PRINCIPLES. These underlay Mosaism, and were discovered by the more devout and thoughtful Jews. These were brought out to view by the later prophets. It is the great characteristic of Christianity that it is a religion of principles rather than of commands; and makes its appeal to the purposes and the motives rather than to the mere ordering of the conduct. The renewed man, in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, should rule life by the light of holy principles.

III. GOD GIVES LIGHT BY MANIFESTING HIMSELF. In the person of his Son, who is the "Light of the world;" "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." God shows us his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and to walk in obedience to Christ, in dependence upon Christ, in fellowship with Christ, and in full purpose to serve, honour, and glorify Christ, is the way to "walk in the light of the Lord."—R. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Shame for the sinner.* We can more easily bear suffering than shame. Man has great powers of physical endurance. But we dread shame as we dread nothing else. There was the keenest distress in that old and cruel way of treating some criminals. They were put in the pillory. They were lifted up on a stage in the

market-place. A frame was fastened round the neck and wrists, which left the head and hands exposed. Crowds gathered below, and scorned the poor man, throwing at him all manner of vile things, and then raising the laugh at his soiled and bemired face. The shame of such a punishment must have been very hard to bear. The chapter before us intimates that this intenser kind of punishment, this shame and humiliation, awaits all who forsake or neglect the living God, and serve the idols of their own pleasure. The Law of God must indeed rise up to vindicate its claims and execute its sanctions; it must lift up its hand to smite. But there is something more solemn than that; the Law shall come to the sinner himself one day. It shall look upon him with its look of inward purity and outraged love; it shall be the look of his God. That will be a flash of the eternal light; it will reveal to him the blackness of his heart, and pride will be, once for all, crushed; vain confidences will drop out of his hands, and, putting those hands on his face, he will cry in his shame, "O rock, hide me from the fear of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty." The fear of coming shame ought to deter men from evil.

I. RIGHT AND WRONG ARE READILY CONFOUNDED IN THIS WORLD. "Woe unto those who call evil good, and good evil," disturbing thus the foundations of morals, and confusing the testimony of men's consciences. Evil and good are opposites, contradictories; they meet nowhere, they blend nohow. Few men question the distinction between right and wrong, but many ask on what ground the distinction rests; and "Is it possible for us men clearly to recognize the distinction?" Are there no finer shades of circumstance which occasion difficulty and confusion? In this complicated state of society do we not need some very clear, sharp, precise test? And is there any such? There is. The right, the true, is everything with which we can associate the presence and inspection of God, without feeling either sense of unfitness or fear. In order to discover the contents and qualities of a substance, the chemist will add some testing fluid to it, and by the effect produced he learns the qualities. That we can do to test the rightness or wrongness of any act of life. *Add the thought of God to it.* But the fact stares us in the face that good and evil are now sadly confounded. 1. It is often so when the movements of life are made without befitting consideration. Into so many undertakings we are simply borne by the press of social customs, the example of our neighbours, or the influence of excitement; and we have actually stepped over the borderland of the *right* before we have quite realized our position. 2. It is often so because the false can put on such appearances as will suffice to deceive us. "Even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." 3. And it is often so because the wrong bias of our souls even makes us willing to see fancied goodness in the false. So often the wrong offers a present gratification of passion, and so stills opposition and effects its evil design.

II. SOONER OR LATER THE FALSENESS OF THE FALSE, AND THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE TRUE, MUST BE MANIFESTED; and that manifestation must prove an overwhelming shame to all who have served the false. The time of the manifestation is called "the day of God." In some sense the present is man's day. His voice is loud now; his will is strong now; his pleasures abundant; and God seems to be still. Wrong riots, and God seems to hold aloof. Sin rules, and in forbearance God restrains himself. And yet the truth is that God's *day* is an *eternal now*; it is always close at hand. It may be shown that God's day comes (1) in the time of our conversion; (2) in the humbling of our first sight of the cross; (3) in the time of the sinner's remorse; (4) in the time of national calamity; (5) and in what is spoken of in Scripture as "the day of judgment." Men may do in this twilight time of earth, deceiving themselves, and being deceived, in this dim, uncertain light, this mingled shade and shine. If they want to do wrong, it is only to push it a little further into the shadow, and then they cannot well see what it is. But men would blush to do their wrongs in the full blaze of day. They will hide their heads in shame when God dispels the shadows, and makes the revealing light of his day rest on their lives.—R. T.

Vers. 12—17.—*The Lord's day for the proud.* Any time of specific judgment or mercy is in the Scriptures called a "day of the Lord." The day of the Lord has come for the antediluvian world, for Sodom, for the Canaanites, for Babylon, for Israel. It is ever coming to nations, in the corruption or the calamity that follow on national sin.

It will come as long as the world endures; that is, so long as God needs, by external judgments, to mark the evil of sin. The sin of all others that calls for a "day of the Lord" is pride, self-confidence, rebellious self-assertion; and this was precisely the sin of the times in which Isaiah wrote. Man is made for God; he was ruined when he broke relations with God, and in self-will separated himself from God. And there is no hope of restoration until pride is humbled. Therefore for this humbling of self God pleads, and to secure this God sends judgments. Henderson says, "These verses contain a specification of several of the most distinguished objects of nature and art, in order, metaphorically, to represent the different persons or orders of men elevated by the dignity of office, or rendered notable by their riches, or the elegance and luxury of their establishments, whom the judgments of God would, in a more remarkable manner, hurl into ruin." It has been also observed that the emphatic iteration of "lifted up" is noticeable as indicating that the prophet sees in that self-assertion the root-evil of his time, that which was most destructive of the fear of the Lord, and most surely brought down judgment on the offender.

I. ONE DAY GOD HUMBLES THE PROUD NATION. Illustrate from Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself, and took all the glory to himself, and Belshazzar followed him in the same wilfulness; but a day of darkness and terror came for Babylon, of which the handwriting on the wall gave awful warnings. Or take Jerusalem as representing the kingdom of Judah. Puffed up with self-confidence, wilfully resisting the Divine lead, a day of vindication and judgment at last came; her enemies poured in like a flood; the holy city lay in ashes, and her people were either slain or captive. And it is not without good reason that we find modern illustration of God's day for nations in Napoleonic France. Napoleon claiming both to "propose and dispose," and overtaken by God's avenging day at Moscow and Waterloo.

II. GOD'S DAY HUMBLES THE PROUD INDIVIDUAL. That day comes in such forms as these. 1. A slip from integrity brings disgrace and ruin. 2. Masterfulness and arrogance bring hatred, which finds occasion to injure. 3. Riches take to themselves wings and flee away. 4. Mind becomes unsettled, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. 5. Sickness and bereavement come in his family. Sooner or later a day dawns in which the haughty, self-reliant, God-despising man is touched on his sorest, tenderest place. No man can ever be permitted to exalt himself against God and permanently prosper. Give instances from modern life of the downfall of pride, such as the closing years of Squire Beckford's life.

III. GOD'S HUMBLINGS, FOR NATIONS OR FOR MEN, MAY BE MELTINGS, OR THEY MAY HAVE TO BE CRUSHINGS. The result of them depends upon the way in which they are met and responded to. That which is designed to melt may harden; and a judgment that bruises only may be so abused, that it must be followed by a judgment that breaks. Israel would not be humbled by calamity after calamity graciously tempered, so it must be made overwhelming; and Samaria was taken, and the distinct life of Israel, as a nation, crushed out for ever. It is a thought full of painful seriousness, that the quality and degree of our troubles depend on our response to those God has sent, as chastenings, in earlier times. God's hand may be heavy on us, because we have so long resisted his pleadings and his humblings. Judgment is his strange work, mercy is his delight; but if we resist him, further and heavier judgments are demanded by very "mercy."—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Man's disgust at his idols.* In ver. 8 the prophet had observed that one characteristic of the times was prevailing idolatry. The men who had, in their self-will and pride, turned from the living God, had taken up with idols, deities of their own imagining, which answered to the devices and desires of their own hearts, and allowed them to keep their self-will even in their religion. Divinely revealed religion and man-made religions differ in this—the first demands the surrender of self-will, the second finds expressions for, and strengthens by expression, man's self-will. That is the real reason why men constantly fall into idolatry; it keeps them in the "self-sphere." The prophet recognizes this by saying, "Their land also is full of idols they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made." Then, when Jehovah arises to vindicate himself, man is humbled, and one sign of that humbling is sure to be, that his trust in his helpless, self-fashioned idols is broken. He finds out their uselessness when God's testing day comes upon him, and in disgust he is ready

to cast them to the "moles and to the bats," creatures of the darkness. "God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of, even the idols of silver, and the idols of gold, the most precious. The idolaters here throw away their idols because (1) they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them, or (2) because they are afraid of having them found in their possession when the judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods when he is searched for or pursued." Idolatry is a delusion, and when that is suddenly dispelled, the idols will be "thrown away in haste, terror, shame, and desperate contempt by those who had worshipped them and trusted in them." It should be kept in mind that the prophet's words apply to the characteristic idolatries of civilized and modern, as well as of heathen and ancient, times. "Covetous men make silver and gold their idols." Worldly men make pleasure or fame their idols. Parents make children their idols. All will be cast away when God arises to vindicate himself, and his sole claim to man's trust and love and life. The immediate reference of the prophet probably is to the terrible earthquake that took place in Uzziah's reign, and the fright which it occasioned.

I. IDOLATRY IS DELUSION. The calm onlooker sees that the description of idols given in Ps. CXV. is strictly and perfectly true. But the worshipper cannot see this. He believes his idols can really help him, and prays to them with passionate intensity. So the man whose idol is money is deluded. He thinks his money can help him in whatever circumstances he may be placed. But sickness comes, danger comes, plague comes, earthquake comes, shipwreck comes, fire comes, death comes, and it is quite plain that he was deluded. Money is a helpless idol; it cannot aid its votaries in God's day. Point out that the root of the delusion is self-trust; a man wants to rely on something that he has, or that he has done, or that he has made. Blessed only is that man whose trust is in the Lord his God.

II. SOONER OR LATER THE DELUSION IS DISPELLED. Awakening days are sure to come for us all. The apostle teaches that all our trusts and all our works must be tried by fire; "the day shall declare them." Illustrate the dispelling of the delusions of idolatry: 1. By the proved helplessness of the idols. Baal's priests and worshippers had their eyes opened at Carmel, when there "was none that heard, nor any that answered." 2. By advancing intelligence. Illustrate from the influence of education on the natives of India. Science and geography have made it impossible to believe in the legends of their gods. The delusion is in great measure expelled, but a first result is infidelity. Christianity alone can satisfactorily take the place of discarded idolatry. 3. By Divine judgments. Illustrate by such scenes as the earthquakes at Java and Ischia, or the destruction of Pompeii. Or take a visitation of cholera or plague in an idolatrous land. Churches, temples, idols, are forsaken; public helplessness and despair prepares the way for an extension of the evil. He only can be calm whose trust is in the living God. Impress by the contrast of the calmness and confidence of the pious psalmist (Ps. XCI.): "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. . . . Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my Refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The unreliableness of man.* Some think this verse should commence ch. iii.; but it is an exhortation naturally following on the humbling of all human pride and the destruction of all human glory. Man at his best estate is altogether vanity, therefore do not rely upon man. God is from everlasting to everlasting, therefore trust *him*. The counsel is elsewhere given in Scripture, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited" (Jer. XVII. 5, 6). "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Quick-passing breath is the symbol of fleeting life (Gen. ii. 7; vii. 22); and the sentence of the text would better read, "Cease from man, in whose nostrils is a breath." Trusting man was the sin of Isaiah's age. Compare, later on, the afflicted nation seeking succour from Egypt rather than from God, and

therefore coming under the prophet's reproach. But man-trusting is a characteristic sin of *our* age; and we also need to learn that there is—

I. NO TRUSTING IN MAN'S POWER. That is within very narrow limits. "Let not your eye be to the power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him your judgment proceeds. Let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate." There is so much that man can do, we fail to realize, as we should, that he fails us just at the points of our extremest need, at the times when trouble overwhelms, heart fails, and fears are on every side. The man came to Christ with confidence that he *could* help, but doubting his *will*. We may seek our fellow-men in our troubles, confident of their good will, but full of fears as to their ability.

II. NO TRUSTING IN MAN'S KNOWLEDGE. That, indeed, is vast and wonderful; and it is ever-increasing. And yet it is uncertain; we cannot make any foundations of it. What men call *facts* of knowledge are again and again disproved by the discovery of other facts; and what men call *theories* give place to new theories, as fresh minds work upon the old data, and gather new. Apart from revelation men have never found out reliable truth respecting God, man, sin, redemption, or the future.

III. NO TRUST IN MAN'S CHARACTER. The most humiliating thing in human life is the failure from righteousness of those whom we have admired, trusted, and loved. Character, built on self, is uncertain, and in peril whenever temptation draws nigh. In middle life the honourable man so often fails from either (1) drink, (2) dishonesty, or (3) sensuality, that we have sometimes felt we could say, in a moment of excitement, as David did, "All men are liars."

IV. NO TRUST IN MAN'S EXAMPLE. It is always imperfect; it never can be an absolute model. Only one man set us an example that we should follow his steps, and he was the Divine man. We can follow no other man wholly. We can only follow one of our fellows so far as he follows Christ, and so we really only follow the Christ in him.

Where, then, are we to trust? "Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1—7.—GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON JERUSALEM. The general denunciations against Israel of the two preceding chapters are here turned especially against Jerusalem. God will deprive her of all her superior and more honourable classes (vers. 1—3); and will give her "children" for her rulers (ver. 4). There will be continued oppression, and the rise of an insolent and undutiful spirit (ver. 5). Those fit to bear rule will refuse to do so (vers. 6, 7).

Ver. 1.—**The Lord, the Lord of hosts** (see note on ch. i. 24). **The stay and the staff**; rather, *stay and staff*. Neither word has the article. The latter is the feminine form of the former; and the intention is to announce that all support of every kind is about to be withdrawn. **The whole stay of bread . . . of water.** Mr. Cheyne agrees with Hitzig and Knobel that this clause is probably a gloss on the text, subsequently introduced into it, and a gloss which did not proceed from a very enlightened commentator. The "stay" and "staff" intended are certainly not literal "bread" and "water," but the powerful and respectable classes enumerated in the two following verses. If the words are Isaiah's, he must have intended them to be taken metaphorically.

Ver. 2.—**The mighty man, and the man of war**; or, *hero and warrior*. The first rank is given to those distinguished in war, as being held in the highest esteem, and perhaps as actually, under the coming circumstances, the men of most importance to the country. It is thus implied, as later (vers. 25, 26) it is expressly taught, that the impending visitation will be a terrible invasion. **The judge, and the prophet**; literally, *judge and prophet*. The judge holds his place as one of the highest officers of the state (see ch. i. 26); the prophet holds a lower position than might have been expected, on account of the writer's humility. **The prudent**; rather, *the diviner*, as the word is translated in Deut. xviii. 14; 1 Sam. vi. 2; ch. xliv. 25; Jer. xxvii. 9; xxix. 8; Ezek. xiii. 9; Micah iii. 7; Zech. x. 2; or *sooth-sayer*, as in Josh. xiii. 22. Isaiah arranges the classes, not so much according to the

order in which he values them, as to that in which they were valued by the people. **The ancient**; *i.e.* "the elder," as the word is translated commonly. The "elders" had an ascertained position in the state under the monarchy (2 Sam. v. 3; xix. 11; 1 Kings viii. 1; xx. 7; 2 Kings vi. 32, etc.).

Ver. 3.—**The captain of fifty.** "Captains of fifties" were scarcely at this period "civil officers" (Cheyne). They represent simply the lowest grade of officers in the army (2 Kings i. 9, 11, 13). **Honourable.** The same expression is used again in ch. ix. 15. It occurs also in 2 Kings v. 1 and Job xxii. 8. **The cunning artificer.** "All the craftsmen and smiths" in Jerusalem were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar in the captivity of Jehoiachin (2 Kings xxiv. 14; cf. Jer. xxiv. 1). They were among the most valuable of the population, in time of war no less than of peace, since on them depended the construction and repair of the military engines which were regarded as of so much importance (2 Chron. xxvi. 15). **The eloquent orator**; rather, *the expert enchanter* (comp. Eccles. x. 11; Jer. viii. 17).

Ver. 4.—**I will give children to be their princes**; rather, *youths* than "children." The extreme youth of the later kings of Judah at the date of their accession is very remarkable. After Hezekiah, only one was as much as twenty-five years old when he came to the throne. Jehoahaz was twenty-three (2 Kings xxiii. 31); Amon, twenty-two (2 Kings xxi. 19); Zedekiah twenty-one (2 Kings xxiv. 18); Jehoiachin, eighteen (2 Kings xxiv. 8); Manasseh, twelve (2 Kings xxi. 1); and Josiah eight (2 Kings xxii. 1). Thus this prophecy was fulfilled to the letter. **And babes shall rule over them**; literally, *puerilities shall rule over them*; i.e. the youths shall behave in a childish way.

Ver. 5.—**And the people shall be oppressed,** etc.; rather, *shall oppress each man his fellow, and each man his companion.* This would be no new thing (see ch. i. 17, 21, 23), but perhaps might be more widely spread, having passed from the upper classes to the lower ones, as is usual with vices. **The child**; rather, *the youth.* **Shall behave himself proudly**; or, *insolently.* The respect for age inculcated by the Law (Lev. xix. 32) shall disappear. Youths shall set at nought the counsel of the aged. The spirit of Rehoboam shall prevail over that of Solomon, with the usual result—rashness, recklessness, and failure. **And the base,** etc. Respect for station shall likewise disappear. The dregs of the people shall grow insolent towards those above them in the social scale; and thus the old social order shall be inverted.

Ver. 6.—**When a man shall take hold of his brother.** A new departure. In the general anarchy described (vers. 4, 5) it will be felt that something must be done. A man will take hold of his brother (*i.e.* his fellow) *in* his (*i.e.* the latter's) father's house, where he lives in seclusion, and say to him, "Thou hast clothing" (or, "thou art decently clad"), "thou must be our ruler; let this ruin" (*i.e.* "this ruined state") "be under thy hand." **This ruin**; literally, *this stumbling-block* (see Zeph. i. 3; and compare the uniform translation of the kindred noun *mikshôl* (Lev. xix. 14; Ps. cxix. 165; ch. lvii. 14; Jer. vi. 21; Ezek. iii. 20; vii. 10, etc.). The Jewish community is meant, which was full of stumbling itself, and might well cause all those to stumble who came into contact with it.

Ver. 7.—**In that day shall he swear**; or, *lift up his voice*—speaking with emotion (Kay). **I will not be an healer**; literally, *a binder-up* (comp. ch. i. 6); "I will not undertake to heal the calamities of the state." **In my house is neither bread nor clothing**; *i.e.* "I am not a wealthy man; I have no stores laid up; I am quite unfit to be the people's ruler." **Make me not**; or, *ye shall not make me.* The decently clad man entirely declines to be advanced to the helm of the state.

Vers. 8.—26.—THE CAUSE OF THE JUDGMENT SHOWN TO BE THE SINS OF JERUSALEM. 1. *The sins of the men.* (Vers. 8—15). These are declared to be partly sins of speech, but mainly sins of act (ver. 8). Of sins of speech the only one specified is the open and shameless declaration of their wickedness (ver. 9). Under the head of sins of act are enumerated (1) childishness and effeminacy; (2) irreligion and leading people away from God (ver. 12); (3) oppression of the poor and afflicted (vers. 14, 15). The enumeration of the sins is mixed with exhortation and comment in such a way as to give rise to the conjecture that we have here, not the original prophecy as the author penned it, but a later "summary" of several prophetical discourses, which summary itself is "a little fragmentary" (Cheyne).

Ver. 8.—**Jerusalem is ruined**; or, *has come to ruin*—the "perfect of prophetic certainty" (Cheyne)—(comp. Amos v. 2, "The virgin of Israel *is fallen*"). **Their tongue and their doings.** Sins of the tongue are denounced in the Old Testament as well as in the New, though not, perhaps, so frequently (see Exod. xx. 7; xxi. 17; xxii. 28; xxiii. 1, 2; Ps. xxxi. 18; xciv. 4, etc.). **To provoke the eyes of his glory.** This is an unusual metaphor. God's glory seems here to be identified with himself, as being

of his very essence; and thus "provoking the eyes of his glory" is simply provoking him to look on them with anger.

Ver. 9.—**The show of their countenance doth witness against them.** This is not in itself a sin, but it is a sign of frequent and habitual sin. Vice, long indulged in, stamps its mark upon the countenance, giving men what is called "a bad expression"—a guilty and hardened look. It does not require a skilled physiognomist to detect at a glance the habitual criminal or sensualist. **They declare their sin as Sodom.** Not only does their countenance betray them, but, like the Sodomites (Gen. xix. 5, 9), they boldly and impudently declare their wicked purposes beforehand, and make no attempt at concealment. Hypocrisy has been said to be the homage that vice pays to virtue. Where there is none, where vice has ceased to shroud or veil itself, a very advanced stage of wickedness has been reached. **They have rewarded evil unto themselves.** They have "received *in themselves* the recompense of their error which was meet" (Rom. i. 27). Their sins have at once marred their countenance and injured their moral nature.

Ver. 10.—**Say ye to the righteous.** The mention of the fact that the men of Jerusalem have permanently injured their moral natures by sin, and thus "rewarded evil to themselves," leads the prophet to declare at this point, parenthetically, the general law, which extends alike to the evil and the good—that men receive in themselves the recompense of their deeds. The righteous raise their moral nature, become better, and, in becoming better, become happier. "It is well with them, for of the fruit of their doings they eat." The wicked deprave and corrupt themselves, lower their moral nature, become worse than they were, and, in becoming worse, become more miserable. "Woe unto them! with them it is ill; for the achievement of their hands is given them."

Ver. 12.—**As for my people.** Return is now made to the sins of the dwellers in Jerusalem, and the first thing noted is that the people suffer from the childishness and effeminacy of their rulers. The rulers are called "oppressors" by the way here, the sin of oppression being dwelt on later (vers. 14, 15). Here the emphatic words are "children," "women." **Children** (see ver. 4). The rulers are "children," or rather "babes"—foolish, capricious, cowardly. It is not clear that any prince in particular is meant; rather, by the plural form, the upper class generally seems to be intended, as in ch. i. 10, 17, 23, etc. **Women**; comp. Herod., viii. 88, where Xerxes says that "his men have shown themselves women, and his women men;" and see also Virg., 'Æneid'—

"O vere *Phrygiæ*, neque enim Phryges."

The rulers were womanly, *i.e.* weak, wavering, timid, impulsive, passionate, and are therefore called actual "women." There is no allusion to female sovereigns. **They which lead thee cause thee to err**; or, *they which direct thee lead thee astray.* Professing to point out the right path, they led men away from it. **Destroy the way**; literally, *swallow it up*, or *obliterate it.*

Ver. 13.—**The Lord standeth up to plead.** The *great* sin of the time was oppression of the poor by the rich, and especially by the rulers (ch. i. 15, 17, 21). In noticing this, the prophet, to give more weight to his denunciation, introduces Jehovah as standing up, and coming forward on the popular side, to plead the people's cause, and remonstrate with their oppressors. There is great force in this sudden entrance on the scene of Jehovah himself, as Pleader and Judge. **And . . . judge the people**; rather, *the peoples.* Primarily, Israel is God's care; but he does not stop at this point. All the nations of the earth are also under his protection.

Ver. 14.—**The ancients . . . the princes.** These were the chief oppressors. They delivered the judgments, and it was by them that justice was perverted. Jehovah therefore enters specially into judgment with them. **For ye have eaten up**; rather, *So ye have eaten up.* Jehovah is supposed to address the unjust judges. He reproaches them with having "eaten up," or rather "scorched up," his vineyard, *i.e.* Israel (comp. ch. v. 1—7), and taxes them with having still their ill-gotten gains in their houses. "So *ye*," he says, "have thus acted—ye whose duty it was to have acted so differently."

Ver. 15.—**What mean ye?** *i.e.* "What has come over you?" or "What strange perversity has possessed you?" (Kay). **That ye beat my people to pieces, etc.** The strongest possible expressions are used to mark God's abhorrence of the oppression to which the poor were subjected. Under the Law, he constituted himself the champion of such persons (see Exod. xxii. 22—24).

2. *The sins of the women.* (Vers. 16—26.) These may be summed up under the three heads of pride, wanton manners (ver. 16), and love of dress and ornament (vers. 18—23). It was natural that, with increased commerce (2 Kings xiv. 22; ch. ii. 16) and more frequent communication with foreign nations, such as Assyria (2 Kings xvi. 7—10) and Babylon (2 Kings xx. 12,

13), there should be an increase of luxury, and quite in accordance with Eastern ideas that the luxury should particularly show itself in the dress and adornment of the women. The Egyptian remains show an advanced state of luxury among the women at a time anterior to Moses; and in Assyria, though the evidence is less abundant, we find also indications of a similar kind. The Jews, whose regard for their women was high, are not likely to have been behindhand in the gallantry which shows itself in heaping ornament and the newest appliances of civilization on the weaker sex.

Ver. 16.—**The daughters of Zion.** It is over-fanciful to go beyond the plain meaning of the words here, and suppose allegory. "The daughters of Zion" are the female inhabitants of Jerusalem. **Are haughty**; or, *proud*—like the men (ch. ii. 11, 12, 17). **Walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "ogling eyes." Both actions indicate the desire to attract men's attention, and are shameless and immodest. **Walking and mincing as they go**; *i.e.* taking short steps in an affectedly childish way. **Making a tinkling with their feet.** This meaning is generally accepted, though not very certain. It has been suggested that the anklets which they wore (ver. 18) had silver bells attached to them.

Ver. 17.—**Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab.** Thus destroying their beauty by producing baldness (comp. ver. 24; and for the meaning "smite with a scab," see Lev. xiii. 2; xiv. 56).

Ver. 18.—**The bravery of their tinkling ornaments** about their feet; rather, *of their anklets.* Anklets were worn by the Egyptian women from the time of the twelfth dynasty (about B.C. 1900). They were, in general, plain rings of metal, but appear to have been sometimes set with precious stones (see Lepsius, 'Denkmäler,' pt. ii. pls. 128, 129). No bells appear attached to any; but bells were known in Assyria from the time of Sennacherib ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 417, 2nd edit.). **Their cauls**; margin, *networks.* The marginal rendering is probably correct (comp. LXX., *ἐμπλόκια*). Network caps to contain the hair seem to be intended (so Kimchi, Saadiah, Jarchi, Rosenmüller, Kay). Mr. Cheyne prefers "wreaths worn round the forehead, reaching from one ear to the other." **Round tires like the moon**; rather, *crescents.* Flat ornaments in metal, like a young moon, generally worn suspended round the neck (see Judg. viii. 26, where the same word occurs).

Ver. 19.—**The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers**; rather, *the ear-drops, and the armlets, and the veils.* Ear-rings were worn from very ancient times by both the Assyrians and the Egyptians. The ring had frequently a pendant hanging from it. Men wore armlets in Assyria, and both men and women in Egypt (Lepsius, 'Denkmäler,' pt. iii. pl. 1). Veils have always been regarded in the East as almost a necessary part of female attire.

Ver. 20.—**The bonnets**; rather, *the head-gear.* It is quite uncertain what this was, since we have no representations of Hebrew women. Egyptian women commonly wore a mere fillet with pendant ends. The Hebrew word here employed is used in Exodus of the head-dress of the priests (xxxix. 28). **The ornaments of the legs.** These are explained as chains connecting the two anklets together. **The head-bands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings**; rather, *the girdles, and the scent-bottles, and the amulets.* Scent-bottles and jars for holding sweet-smelling unguents are among the most frequent toilette articles recovered from Egyptian tombs and Assyrian palaces. Amulets have been worn in the East from very ancient times, and are still trusted in as much as ever. They frequently take the form of ornaments.

Ver. 21.—**The rings**; literally, *seal-rings*, or *signet-rings.* Such were known in Egypt from the time of Joseph (Gen. xli. 42), and probably earlier. It would seem from the present passage that their use was not confined to men. **Nose-jewels.** Actual nose-rings are not represented in any of the ancient remains; and the use of them seems to be confined to very barbarous communities. Probably the "nose-jewels" here mentioned were ornaments depending from the forehead and touching the upper part of the nose.

Ver. 22.—**The changeable suits of apparel**; rather, *the festival robes* (Revised Version), or *the full-dress suits*; i.e. those worn upon grand occasions, and then put off and set aside. **The mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins**; rather, *the upper petticoats, the wraps, and the purses.* An inner and an outer tunic or petticoat were commonly worn by females of the higher class in the East. The inner tunic was a simple linen vest; but the outer was generally of a better material, and richly ornamented. Outside this, a sort of wrap, or cloak, was worn occasionally (see Ruth iii. 15). Purses were, no doubt, carried by wealthy persons of both sexes; but their mention in this list does not seem very appropriate. Perhaps *toilet*-bags of some kind or other are intended (see 2 Kings v. 23).

Ver. 23.—**The glasses**; rather, *the mirrors*. In ancient times these were not made of glass, but of some metal which took a high polish. Most commonly, the material seems to have been bronze. Many such mirrors have been found in Egypt, a few in Assyria, in Etruria a considerable number. They are of small size, intended to be carried in the hand, and have for that purpose a metal or a wooden handle, which is sometimes highly artistic. **The fine linen**; rather, *the muslin robes*. *Sedin*, the Hebrew word used, is probably a corruption or analogue of *sindon*, the Greek name for Indian fabrics. It is only used here and in Judg. xiv. 12, 13; Prov. xxxi. 24. **The hoods, and the vails**; or, *the turbans and the scarfs*. The word translated "hood" is nearly the same as that which designates the head-dress of the high priest in Exodus (xxviii. 4, 37, 39; xxix. 6, etc.) and Leviticus (viii. 9; xvi. 4), which seems to have been a "turban" (see note on Exod. xxviii. 4). The other word, here translated "vail," occurs only in this place and Cant. v. 7. Its exact meaning is uncertain; but it can scarcely be a veil; since "veils" have been already mentioned (ver. 19).

Ver. 24.—**Instead of sweet smell**; literally, *spice* (comp. Exod. xxxv. 28; 1 Kings x. 10, etc.). **Stink**; rather, *rottenness*, as translated in ch. v. 24 (compare the cognate verb in Lev. xxvi. 39). **Instead of a girdle a rent**. So Lowth and Kay; but most moderns prefer the meaning given by the Septuagint and Vulgate, "instead of a girdle, a *rope*." The word used occurs only in this place. **Instead of well-set hair baldness** (compare above, ver. 17). By "well-set hair" seems to be meant "hair arranged with such exactness and order as to look like a work of art." The exact arrangement of the hair is very remarkable, both in the Egyptian and the Assyrian sculptures. Instead of such elaborate attempts to improve their looks, the daughters of Jerusalem would soon pluck their hair out by the roots, or shave it off, in mourning. **A girding of sackcloth** (comp. Gen. xxxvii. 34; 2 Sam. iii. 31, etc.; and for the adoption of the custom by women, see 2 Sam. xxi. 10; Joel i. 8). **Burning instead of beauty**. This meaning is now generally acknowledged, the sense of "burning" being borne out by the cognate verb used in Prov. vi. 28; ch. xliii. 2, and the cognate noun used in Exod. xxi. 25. The "burning" intended is probably branding by a barbarous enemy (see Herod., vii. 233; 'Hist. Tamerlan.,' p. 320).

Ver. 25.—**Thy men**; rather, *thy people*; i.e. the inhabitants of Jerusalem generally. Note here the first distinct statement that the coming visitation will be one of war.

Ver. 26.—**Her gates**. The sudden change of person is common in Oriental poetry. **Shall lament and mourn**. On account of their destruction, which would be very complete (see Lam. i. 4; ii. 9; Neh. i. 3; ii. 13). Conquerors could not do more than break breaches in the walls of a town, but they carefully destroyed the gates. Being desolate; or, *emptied*—plundered of everything, and so far "cleansed" from her abominations. **Shall sit upon the ground**. In deep grief (see Job ii. 13; and comp. ch. xlvii. 1; Lam. ii. 10). So in the coin of Vespasian, the captive Judah (*Judæa capta*) sits upon the ground.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Many steps in the decay of states.* Ruin does not often come on states at once, even when God has determined on it. There are many steps in the fall of a great nation.

I. CESSATION OF A SUCCESSION OF GREAT AND WISE MEN. (Vers. 2, 3.) One of the first marks of decay is a falling off in this succession. When the intervals between one great man and another lengthen; when wise men, capable of giving the state good counsel, grow rare; when mediocrity everywhere prevails, and no one steps forth conspicuous by marked superiority to his fellows;—then it may at once be proclaimed that decline has set in, and that the nation is verging towards its fall. The great and the wise are the salt which preserve society from corruption. Without them all goes wrong; the pulse of the national life slackens, energy disappears, foreign aggression is weakly resisted, a general debilitation becomes apparent in every part and function of the body politic. No state can long resist the insidious malady, which, like atrophy or *anæmia*, steals gradually over the entire frame, exhausting it, and bringing about its dissolution.

II. ACTIVE FOLLY IN THE RULERS. (Ver. 4.) When the great and the wise fail, government necessarily falls into the hands of the incompetent. If not "children" in age, they will be "babes" in respect of policy and statecraft. So long, however, as

they are willing to follow the traditions of the past, to work upon well-known lines, and carry out established practices, no very great harm can arise. But they are seldom content for many years to act thus. A childish desire seizes them to attract attention, to exhibit their power. Hence they plunge into active follies, wild schemes of aggression and conquest, or imprudent and unsuitable alliances, as that of Ahaz with Tiglath-Pileser (2 Chron. xxviii. 16, 20). The state is brought into difficulties and entanglements, and the wisdom is wanting that should have seen a way out of them. One embarrassment follows another. Unexpected circumstances arise, and it is not perceived how they should be met. The unwisdom of the good is perhaps as fatal as the folly of the wicked (*e.g.* Josiah's uncalled-for resistance of Pharaoh-Nechoh, 2 Kings xxiii. 29), and leads to great disasters. Meanwhile other causes are at work, which advance the general confusion and accelerate the final catastrophe.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF SELFISHNESS AMONG THE PEOPLE. (Ver. 5.) Society is based upon the principles of justice and mutual good will. While states prosper, it requires no extraordinary virtue in men to deal justly by their neighbours, and act towards them in a friendly spirit. But when the times are out of joint, when there is general impoverishment and distress, it is no longer easy to be amicable or even just. "Every man for himself!" becomes the cry; the spirit of selfishness is evoked and runs riot; "the people" (no longer the "rulers" or the "judges," ch. i. 10, 23) "oppress every one another, and every one his neighbour" (ch. iii. 5). This indulgence of the selfish spirit acts as a solvent—loosens the bonds which have hitherto held society together, and goes far to reduce the united mass, in whose union was its strength, to a congeries of atoms.

IV. CESSATION OF RESPECT FOR AGE OR SOCIAL RANK. (Ver. 5.) The disintegration of society tends to place all the atoms upon a par. While the social order was maintained, and the whole society felt itself one, the parts knew their need one of the other, and recognized their respective positions of inferiority and superiority. But with the loosening of the social ties comes naturally a general self-assertion. In a physical chaos atoms are of equal value, and why not in a disintegrated society? Hence the young in such a state throw off their allegiance to the old; even sons cease to respect or obey their fathers, and daughters their mothers. The humbler classes of toilers for daily bread no longer look up to their more favoured brethren, but rather view them with jealousy and hatred. Class is alienated from class, and the tendency to a complete dissolution of society aggravated.

V. NEGLECT OF THEIR CIVIL DUTIES ON THE PART OF THE WELL-TO-DO CLASSES. (Vers. 6, 7.) *Noblesse oblige.* In a distracted state of society, it is especially incumbent on those whose means place them beyond the reach of want, and allow them ample leisure, to come to the relief of their neighbours by undertaking those civil duties and offices on which the welfare of the body politic depends. But it is exactly at such times that we find this class of persons most inclined to ignore this obligation, and withdraw wholly from political life (ver. 7). Some, like Plato, justify themselves under the plea that nothing can be done to save society, and that they may be excused for taking refuge under the first shelter that offers while the storm rages and exhausts itself. Others plead the vulgarizing effect of active political life, and claim the right of keeping their superfine humanity free from the smears and stains which mixture with the crowd would bring upon it. On one excuse or another, or not unfrequently without condescending to make any excuse, the upper classes in a distracted state stand aloof, neglect their civil duties, and refuse all the calls that are made on them to come to the rescue, and do their best to save the "ruin" that is tottering to its fall.

Vers. 9—11.—*The law of retributive justice not mechanical, but moral.* The doctrine of future rewards and punishments is sometimes preached in a way that is, if not offensive, at any rate unsatisfactory. God is made to deal with men as not even judicious parents would deal with their children—viz. for so much obedience, so much bestowal of pleasure or indulgence; for so much disobedience, an equal award of pain and punishment. But this is certainly not the doctrine of Holy Scripture. Scripture represents the reward of well-doing as "eternal life," and this "eternal life" is the vigorous energy of all that is good in the man himself, sustained and strengthened by the Spirit of Christ in the soul, and accompanied by happy feelings of love and trust and thankfulness. "Eternal life"

begins in this world, and is only carried out to perfection in the next. It is, in the main, a state of feeling—consciousness of being at one with God, consciousness of communion with him. It admits, no doubt, of exaltation from without, as here by the special shedding of Divine influences upon the soul, and hereafter by the transcendent blessing of the beatific vision; but it is principally in the man himself. It is a condition of mind, not a set of external circumstances. And so with ill-doing and its consequence, "eternal death." Men make their own misery by their deeds. They "receive within themselves the recompense of their errors." They mar their moral nature; they refuse to hold communion with God; and then, thrown back upon themselves, and having nothing within them pleasing to contemplate or to be conscious of, they find themselves wretched—they have created their own hell.

Vers. 16—24.—*The share which women have in producing the ruin of a nation.* The influence of women upon men was intended to be helpful (Gen. ii. 20), purifying, and refining. Woman is naturally more pure than man, more modest, more retiring, more instinctively right in her moral judgments. Good women exercise an extraordinary influence over the best men, who continually consult them in the most difficult crises of politics and diplomacy. They read men far better than men read one another, and are excellent counsellors on many of the most important occasions. But as the power for good which they wield is great, so is their power for evil. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* Bad women are far worse than the worst men; and the ruin of a state is always partly, sometimes mainly, caused by its women. The sins of women chiefly noted by Isaiah in this passage are: 1. The vanity and love of admiration which show themselves in excessive attention to dress and ornament. 2. The wantonness and immodesty which sometimes characterize their conduct. 3. The pride and haughtiness which under certain circumstances they display. All these are corrupting influences in a state, and help forward its decay and ruin.

I. VANITY AND LOVE OF ADMIRATION, AS SHOWN IN EXCESSIVE ATTENTION TO DRESS AND ORNAMENT. The desire to please is not in itself wrong, and attention to dress within certain limits is to be commended. A woman does not prove herself perfectly virtuous by being a sloven. But there is an attention to such matters and a quasi-devotion to them which is plainly excessive, and which has often the most injurious consequences. A tone of frivolity is engendered by much consideration of matters so trivial, which unfits a woman for dealing with the difficult problems of life and action. The management of her household and the training of her children, which are the principal duties, at any rate, of married women, are apt to be neglected by the woman of fashion, who dresses five times a day, and passes half her time at her toilet-table. Serious inroads are made upon a husband's means, sometimes to the extent of actual ruin, by the extravagance of those who cannot bear to see any one better dressed than themselves. Selfishness, worldliness, littleness, are impressed on the character, all higher aims being set aside, and nothing sought but the admiration of the other sex.

II. WANTONNESS AND IMMODESTY often follow on the love of admiration and grow out of it. A woman who courts admiration forgets the reserve which becomes her sex, and is tempted to enhance her charms by an indecorous display of them. Once let the limits of modesty be overstepped, and one defence falls after another. *Facilis descensus Averni.* Wanton glances (ver. 16) are succeeded by immodest words, and these lead on to immodest deeds; and at last every barrier is thrown down, and the world sees a Messalina or a Lucrezia Borgia. *General* immodesty in the women of a state is of infrequent occurrence; but where it occurs, is an almost certain indication of approaching social dissolution. The most flagrant instance is that of Rome. There, from the time of the establishment of the empire, the disorders of married and domestic life were excessive. "A kind of rivalry in impurity grew up between the two sexes; and there were more seducers than seduced of the female sex" (Döllinger, 'Jew and Gentile,' vol. ii. p. 257). "In Rome the women, deprived of all moral support, became just what the men made them, and so sank with them incessantly deeper and deeper" (ibid., p. 276). Historians generally, ascribe the fall of the Roman empire to no cause more than to the corruption of the Roman women.

III. PRIDE AND HAUGHTINESS are not natural vices of women; but, when developed, they attain vast proportions, and lead on to great calamities. Jezebel and Athaliah in

Old Testament history, Amestris and Parysatis in Persian, Tanaquil in Roman, are examples of the power of women for evil, when they step out of their sphere, assume to direct the policy of states, dispense life and death, and lord it over the people of a kingdom. In such cases their haughtiness outdoes that of men, and provokes a more intense feeling of dissatisfaction and resentment. Revolution often follows, or in any case disaffection towards the government; and an additional element of danger is introduced, which becomes fatal under certain circumstances. Altogether, it would seem that women have quite as much influence as men towards producing the ruin of states, and are quite as responsible for political catastrophes.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*A picture of anarchy.* The words carry on the sense of the closing saying of the preceding paragraph, "Cease ye from man."

I. THE RULERS OF THE PEOPLE REMOVED. Government is one of the *necessities* of human life. Hence the rulers are spoken of as "staff and stay, staff of bread and staff of water." Even bad rulers are better than none, so that they may be described as main props or supports of life. In the same way says Ezekiel, "I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem" (iv. 16; v. 16). To see how truly good government may be thus described, let us remember that, by timely and wise legislation, bread and other necessaries of life have been cheapened and secured to the people. With good government men may be well fed and prosperous even in unkindly lands, while through evil government once fertile plains (like the Roman Campagna) have become wastes.

II. THE NERVE AND STRENGTH OF THE NATION BROKEN. A nation needs heroes, men of courage for the battle-field. It needs men of discretion and integrity for the seat of justice and the bar. It needs men of religious faith and insight as prophets and teachers; and in every department, military, civil, ecclesiastical, scientific, there is a constant demand for able and honest men. There is to be a dearth of them in Jerusalem. The false leaders to whom the people have looked up, the idol-prophets and the magicians, are to be taken away along with the true. "Children" and "baby-boys," the prophet caustically says, shall become the princes and rulers of the nation. Ahaz was quite a young man; his "weakness of character and foolish humours would have been quite sufficient, in the sixteen years of his reign, to put the whole kingdom out of joint." The picture may remind us that men of intelligence and virtue are the great necessity in every time. If in the state statesmen are not being bred, and in the Church weak and illiterate men swarm, it is a sign of most certain moral weakness and decay.

III. ANARCHY THE RESULT. 1. *In private life.* Good neighbourhood is broken up, for it must rest on the common recognition of law and custom; and what if these be subverted? Age and rank no longer command respect. The beardless boy affronts the hoary head, the churl would level the gently born with himself. Nothing is more odious than the levelling temper of troublous times; for the fine gradations of rank are part essentially of a system of higher culture. 2. *In public life.* So extreme is the need of guidance and rule, that private proposals will be made to almost any seeming respectable man to take up the reins of government. But none will be found willing to govern "these ruins," or to be chief of so mere a rabble. We may use the picture as an allegory of the soul. When sin has set our being at variance with itself, and all our confidence and self has failed, we may be glad to find any yoke that we may creep beneath. Yet this may be denied. Those who, in the rebellion of lust and self-will, have sought to be "lords of themselves," may find a heritage of woe entailed. "The soul would never rule. It would be first in all things; but this attained, commanding for commanding sickens it."—J.

Vers. 8—15.—*The reasons of judgment.* In man's sufferings they must own they are subject to the reasonable rule of him who is eternal Reason.

I. ANTAGONISM TO THE DIVINE RULE. In word and deed. 1. In current talk, writing, speechifying, it is difficult to detect where the falsehood lies. It consists in the suppression of certain important sides of truth, and in putting forward interested, partial views of things. The literature of a people cannot be sound, if it be sunk in greed of gold and

luxury as Judah had been. The hollowness consists in the reference of everything to a low standard of value. Not until a great preacher, prophet, or writer—a Savonarola, a Latimer, a Carlyle—arises to shed the splendour of eternal truth upon our ways, do we discover how false and mean they have been. 2. We find we have "provoked the eyes of God's majesty" by our way of life. What hard-heartedness and brazen defiance of humanity and morality is brought to light from time to time, when some reformer directs attention to an abuse! Men cynically "make fortunes" out of the flesh and blood of their fellow-creatures. Have not in our time the cries of factory children, and over-toiled seamstresses, and drowning sailors, and "gutter children" gone up into the ears of the Lord of hosts? Isaiah is modern as well as ancient, for the Word he delivers is eternal.

II. THE NEMESIS OF EVIL, THE RECOMPENSE OF GOOD. 1. *Wickedness is suicidal.* "Woe to their soul, for to themselves they did evil!" Here lights the deepest curse, here rankles at last the arrow; in the soul! Dante sees in hell (c. xii.), in three circles, those who have wronged their neighbour, their God, and themselves. But every species of wrong works out its woe in self.

> "Man can do violence
> To himself and his own blessings; and for this
> He in the second round must aye deplore
> With unavailing penitence his crime.
> Whoe'er deprives himself of life and light,
> In reckless banishment his talent wastes,
> And sorrows there where he should dwell in joy."

Men may afford the loss of property, of a limb, of health; but not of love, not of the soul. The denial of love, or the waste of it, means the loss of the soul. 2. *Goodness is self-rewarding.* Often is the good man compared to a tree, bringing forth fruit by a law of nature, according to its kind and in its season. There is strict and beautiful sequence in life and character. No curse, no blessing, "causeless comes." The bitter fruit we bring forth comes from interference with the Divine nature God has given us. It is said that wanton Arabs sometimes

> "Foil a dwarf palm
> Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
> By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
> Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,
> Till forth one vine-palm fastens to the root,
> And red drops moisten the insipid fruit."
>
> (R. Browning, 'Sordello,' p. 131.)

Such is sin and sin's result on the being; a parody and mockery of that sound and true life so beautifully presented under the image of a tree in the first psalm.

III. MISRULE. There has been weakness and effeminacy in high places. And this is often more mischievous than strong and open violence. A vast growth of vicious and interested passions springs up in the neighbourhood of a weak court. It is the opportunity for many bad men to exert their ambition. A powerful will generally works some good at the head of affairs, even though its wielder be not a good man. But feebleness is always baneful in public life. Everything is uncertain when the purpose is vacillating, and no settled principle exists. The feeble ruler will be swayed by every gust of caprice, by every personal influence that attacks his ear, every passion that enslaves his heart. Several of our kings—John, Richard II., the Charleses—have been examples of this. The country may be compared to a beautiful vineyard which the rulers have been appointed to keep (ch. v. 1—7). They have trampled it down and despoiled it, and have "ground the sufferers' faces." The image is taken from the mill, where a substance is worn down until nothing is left. The contemporary prophet Micah uses still stronger language (iii. 2, 3). The rulers flay the people, and cutting them in pieces, cast them, as it were, into a caldron. Unhappily this picture has its counterpart to-day in many Eastern lands. The women of the harem practically rule and devour the people in their greed. Personally, the description may be applied. God has entrusted to each of us a garden or vineyard to keep. Diligence and faithfulness

will have their reward. For sloth, neglect, waste, and abuse, God will enter into judgment with us.—J.

Ver. 16—ch. iv. 1.—*The women of Jerusalem.* The habits and the *morale* in general of the court and the aristocracy are a sure index of the state of the nation. Fashion guides, but is in a measure controlled by the general opinion. Wanton pride and luxury in high places bespeak a general want of moral tone.

I. THEIR PRIDE. The picture is minute and scathingly satirical. The daughters of Zion walk with "necks held up."

II. THEIR LASCIVIOUSNESS. The "rolling eyes" are often mentioned as characteristic of Aphrodite or Ashtoreth, the unchaste goddess of sensual love.

III. THEIR FINERY AND LUXURY. A complete catalogue of articles of personal adornment is given. The instinct for dress and decoration, so strong in women and so graceful if followed with moderation, easily passes beyond the bounds, and becomes an offence and vice.

IV. THE REVERSE OF THE PICTURE. The perfumes will be exchanged for a stench, the waistband for the rough cord of poverty, the abundance of flowing hair will be replaced by repulsive baldness. "A brand instead of beauty!" Their husbands will fall in the war. There will be melancholy groups gathering at the public place, the gates; and in vain will they, once lapped in luxury, seek the protection and the honour of the marriage state (cf. 1 Cor. vii. 36). One of our poets has called up the picture of Venice and her women in old days of mirth and folly, which may be compared.

> "As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
> Here on earth they bore their fruitage—mirth and folly were the crop.
> What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?
> Dust and ashes!"

Only the "sweet and virtuous soul" can give to woman an immortal charm, and ensure her from corrupting and being corrupted.—J.

Ver. 9.—*The revealings of the face.* "The show of their countenance doth witness against them." We are "fearfully and wonderfully made." Just as the countenance reveals the state of our physical health, so do thought and character manifest themselves in the face. All our nature, with its complexity of being, has yet a subtle and mysterious oneness, and the tone of the mind and the inclination of the heart are made manifest, not alone in speech, but in look and gesture and manner. In the simple language of the holy Book, there is a *show* of the countenance.

I. MEN CANNOT PREVENT SELF-REVEALING. As the New Testament says, "They that be otherwise cannot be hid." There is no concealment in nature. The hidden seed springs up even in the cleft of a rock. There is always some damaging witness waiting for an evil man. As the snow reveals the footsteps of the beast of prey, as the wind of the desert drifts the sand from the body that is buried in it, so sin will surely be found out. A bad man's face is a tell-tale of levity and scorn and shame. If God is not in the heart, the light of his presence will not be in the countenance.

II. MEN CANNOT LONG ACT A PART. Nature is against insincerity. You cannot forge her handwriting. You cannot make your artificial rock so that it shall remain unknown beside hers. No. And it is so with voice and face. Hypocrisy drops unconsciously its mask. The same words are spoken differently by sincere and insincere men. We read of hollow laughter. So there is hollow exhortation which does not exercise inspiration over our hearts. So men cannot twist their countenances into false witnessing. There is a blatant iniquity about the wicked which cannot be concealed by long effort. "They declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not."

III. MEN CANNOT AVERT PUNISHMENT. "Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves." They create their own inquisition-chamber. Memory is their misery. No theories of unaccountability can live. Excuses there are none. The conscience tears them to pieces like a spider's web. Life is personal and accountable. We all feel that. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Reward, then, is not always blessing; it is

harvest of golden sheaves or gathered tares, according to our planting. Verily a light from within fills the countenance even of godly men. The prayer is fulfilled. "Cause thy face to shine upon us." "Who is the Health of my countenance, and my God."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—8.—*National and spiritual anarchy.* We have a vivid picture here of—

I. NATIONAL ANARCHY. 1. *Its cause* is found in national rebellion against its rightful Lord. "Their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory" (ver. 8). Sin, both in word and deed, draws down the righteous indignation of God, and, under his just administration, the penalty of iniquity is paid. 2. *Its signs* are seen in: (1) The loss of all fitting leaders (vers. 1—3). Those who constituted "the stay and the staff" are no longer found in positions of authority; those capable of ruling, those qualified to direct and to advise, those who have learnt political sagacity by long experience,—these are not to be obtained; they have been deported, or they have withdrawn, or they are no more trained. (2) The consequent elevation of the incapable (ver. 4). Those hold the high offices of state who are utterly incompetent to fill the posts they have accepted. (3) The presence of injustice and confusion (ver. 5). Instead of all doing that which is conscientious and right as between man and man, every one seeks to overreach his neighbour; fraud and violence are the rule rather than the exception; and instead of the natural subordination of the younger to the elder, there is insolence and presumption. (4) The absence of unselfish patriotism (vers. 6, 7). They who are in a position to render help refuse to do so, untruly and unworthily excusing themselves. 3. *Its issue.* (Ver. 8.) "Jerusalem is being ruined (is ruined); Judah is falling (is fallen)." Bad as things are, they are not at their very worst; there remains a darker and sadder catastrophe yet to complete the destruction; and that, viz. dreary exile for the people and depopulation for the land, will soon arrive.

II. SPIRITUAL ANARCHY. We trace the same cause here as in the case of the ruined nation. 1. *Its cause* is in rebellion against God, and his consequent high displeasure showing itself in just and appropriate penalty (ver. 8). 2. *Its signs* are found in: (1) The dethronement of the soul's true authorities: *conscience*, which directs us what we ought to do; *reason*, which leads us in the path in which it is wise to walk; *pure affection*, which draws us toward the objects we do well to love (vers. 1—3). When sin does its work within, these powers which were meant to rule are supplanted by unworthy rivals. (2) The enthronement of the unfitting (ver. 4). As unsuited to govern a human soul are the rude, uncultured appetites and passions of our lower nature as are "children" and babes to rule over the great affairs of state. (3) Internal struggle and insubordination (ver. 5). The animal appetites asserting themselves unduly and violently against spiritual aspirations and holy principles, and doing them dishonour. (4) Appeal, without response, to our better nature (vers. 6, 7). It is one of the last stages in spiritual demoralization when an earnest, strenuous challenge is made to that which is left in the soul of the heavenly and Divine, and it makes no response, or none, but a miserable resort to that which is false. There is little hope left then; the last sparks are expiring. 3. *Its issue.* (Ver. 8.) A human spirit in such a state is hastening fast to utter and irretrievable ruin. It is in the very act of falling; it is coming to the ground, to be utterly humiliated and broken. It may be perhaps that on earth a soul is never in such complete ruin but that it may be repaired. Yet there are those who have fallen into such disorder that it may be said that the last destruction overhangs them. To such the Master's warning words may well be uttered (see Luke xvii. 31, 32); for they must flee for their life, not losing a moment in starting, nor looking behind them when on their way.—C.

Vers. 9—11.—*The path of sin and the rest of righteousness.* I. THAT SIN CANNOT BE CONCEALED. "The show of their countenance doth witness against them" (ver. 9). Whether Isaiah's words point to the *unconscious* revelation of sin is uncertain, but they clearly suggest the fact. The evil that is in men's hearts is shown in their countenance, whether they wish to conceal it or whether they take a shameful pride in it. The thoughts that flit through the mind, the passions that burn within the soul, the sins that defile the inward man, are written, line by line, on the visage, and "may be known and read of all men." Are there not those whom we have to look upon in the inter-

course of life "whose eyes are full of adultery," or whose cheeks are stained with intoxication, or whose features are drawn together with cruelty; those who, instead of "bearing in their body the marks of the Lord Jesus," carry with them the signs of Satan's service? It is a fact which may well make the guilty wince and hesitate before they continue, that, by the operation of God's righteous laws, the sin which at the beginning they would fain hide in the depths of their own soul, will at length be written on the tablet of the body, and "the show of their countenance will witness against them."

II. THAT SIN, IN ITS LATER STAGES, SCORNS TO BE SCREENED FROM VIEW. "They declare their sin, . . . they hide it not" (ver. 9). In the further stages of iniquity there is no attempt, for there is no desire, to hide the wrong thing from view. Shame gradually declines until it passes away, and in its place there grows up a horrible pride in sin. Men come to gloat over that from which they ought to shrink with utmost sense of humiliation; they "glory in their shame" (Phil. iii. 19). This is eminently true of acts of rapacity and fraud; it also applies to sins of direct ungodliness and of self-indulgence.

III. THAT SIN IS ALWAYS WORKING TOWARDS RUIN. "Woe unto their soul; they have rewarded evil unto themselves" (ver. 9). "Woe unto the wicked," etc. (ver. 11). Sin sometimes prospers long; the "sinner may do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely we know . . . that it shall not be well with the wicked" (Eccles. viii. 12, 13). Nor *is* it well when the end comes (see Ps. lxxiii. 1—20). 1. Sin tends to temporal ill-being, to penury, to sickness, to early death. 2. Sin tends to isolation, to the withdrawal of confidence and affection on the part of the good and worthy, to dishonour, and even degradation. 3. Sin must inevitably lead to spiritual deterioration and, if it be persisted in, to spiritual death. "The wages of sin is death." 4. Sin finally conducts to condemnation and exile from the home of God. Alas! for the soul that is impenitent, that seeks not Divine mercy, that does not return on its way to the living God and to his righteousness. There is a world of meaning in that one small word which constitutes here such a significant sentence—"*ill.*"

IV. THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BEST SECURE IN HOPE. (Ver. 10.) It may *seem* ill to the righteous; "weeping may endure for a night." He may find himself inclined to sigh, "All these things are against me" (Gen. xlii. 36). But "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." The converse of all that applies to the ungodly is true of the godly. Righteousness (1) tends to prosperity here; (2) begets trust and love; (3) results in moral excellency—the good man finds that honesty, purity, truthfulness, sobriety, kindness, etc., issue in spiritual increase, in a harvest of inward good, and *thus* he "eats the fruit of his doings;" (4) conducts at last to the heavenly land, where he who does the will of God "is recompensed at the resurrection of the just."—C.

Vers. 12—15.—*Penalty, natural and supernatural.* We learn—

I. THAT THE NATURAL RESULT OF FOLLY IS TO BE GOVERNED BY THOSE WHO HAVE NO RIGHT TO RULE. 1. *The nation suffers this penalty.* As with Judah now (ver. 12), so with each and every country in its turn and in its way. Unmanliness, frivolity, wickedness among the people, will be reflected in the sovereign power. A nation that lives supremely for material enrichment, or for military conquest, or for pleasurable excitement, must expect to see upon the throne—in the government—men who will represent their evil genius, who will pamper their evil tastes, who will "cause them to err" more wildly, and "destroy them in the way of thy paths." Action and reaction are here as everywhere; the folly of the people expresses itself in the weakness and perversity of the ruler, and these qualities on his part tell in their time and measure upon them. 2. *The Church endures the same evil.* Unspirituality, discord, unbelief, laxity in the Christian community, will certainly issue in a degenerate ecclesiastical authority, and the ruler, using or abusing his opportunity, will lead astray and destroy. 3. *The individual finds the same natural law operating on him and on his life.* By his folly he allows passions instead of principles, impulses instead of convictions, men instead of God, to be his rulers, his "oppressors;" and these cause him to err; they pervert the way of his paths.

II. THAT THEY WHO ARE GUILTY OF MISRULE AND PERVERSITY MUST LOOK FOR THE RIGHTEOUS VISITATION OF GOD. (Vers. 13—15.) "The Lord *standeth up* to plead," "to

judge the people." He confronts and confounds those who have wronged and oppressed his people. If the usurper, the tyrant, the oppressor, the debauchee, the misleader of the nation (the Church), should not meet with the resentment and feel the blows of those whom he has wronged, he must lay his account with the facts that God takes note of all that passes in our human communities, that he holds those who are in power responsible for the effects of their administration, that he regards with severest indignation those who abuse their trust, that he will visit them in his own time and way, here or hereafter, with proofs of his Divine displeasure.—C.

Vers. 16—26.—*The vanity of vanity.* The graphic pen of the prophet brings before us the thoughts—

I. THAT THE LAST AND SADDEST SYMPTOM OF NATIONAL DECLINE IS FOUND IN WOMANLY FOLLY. "Moreover . . . the daughters of Zion," etc. (ver. 16). Corruption may have spread far and done much evil work in the community, but there is hope for the city or the Church so long as the wives and the mothers, the daughters and the sisters, retain their moral and spiritual integrity. When that is gone all is gone. Purity and worth find their last retreat under the domestic roof; if they be driven thence they are doomed to die, and with them perish the prospects of the land.

II. THAT PRIDE AND VANITY IN WOMAN ARE OFFENSIVE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. His prophet here condemns them "because they are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks" (ver. 16); he also describes, evidently in the spirit of strong reprobation, the various articles and instruments of vanity (vers. 18—23). Here are denounced the two sins of *pride* and *vanity*—the overweening estimate of self, and the foolish desire to excite the attention and the passing admiration of others. To be blind to our own defects and, at the same time, to magnify our own excellences, thus gaining and exhibiting a sense of our own goodness and importance quite beyond the measure of our deserts,—such *pride* is hateful to God (Ps. xviii. 27; ci. 5; Prov. vi. 17; 1 Pet. v. 5). And *vanity* is nearly as offensive as pride. To be studying, by every art, to attract the notice of our fellows, and to be peevishly, nervously anxious to secure their praise, instead of seeking first the approval of God and then the commendation of our own conscience,—this is sinful in the sight of the holy and the true One. We may safely say—

III. THAT THESE ARE NOT ONLY HEINOUS OFFENCES AGAINST GOD, BUT PITIABLE MISTAKES IN THE SIGHT OF MAN. 1. Those who assume a worth to which they are not entitled, and hence walk arrogantly before the world, do not receive the tribute of honour which they claim; they only excite derision and contempt. 2. They who, by meretricious ornamentations of their person or their style, endeavour to draw to themselves admiring observation, only succeed in provoking the smile of pity or disdain.

IV. THAT FRIVOLITY IN MAN OR WOMAN WILL MEET ITS DOOM IN THE DAY OF DIVINE PENALTY. (Vers. 24—26.) This will involve: 1. The removal of the sources of frivolous delight. These "the Lord will take away" (ver. 18). For how brief a day do the pleasures of sense last! How soon the sun goes down on the trivialities and temporalities with which the sons and daughters of men amuse themselves and waste their time! 2. A visitation answering to the folly (ver. 24). Sin finds itself paid in its own coin. 3. The sorrow which comes with a sense of desolation (ver. 26). The "arm of flesh" will fail; the human admiration and attention will soon pass. And if the esteem of the wise and the favour of God have been unsought, there is nothing left; everything is in ruins.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The mission of famines.* The words "stay and staff" are by the prophet referred to the two necessaries of life, bread and water. The judgments of God, in the older time, often came in the form of famine and drought; famine as the result of the drought. It was necessary, and it still is necessary, that men should be made to feel their entire dependence upon God for little things as well as great, for common everyday necessities as well as for special days' gifts and mercies. The necessaries of every day seem to be our right; famine-times remind us that they are always direct Fatherly providings. Entering into covenant with Noah, God promised that "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." But the promise concerned the earth as a whole, and

cannot be applied to particular portions of it. Seeding time has always been kept; harvesting work has always been done. Where man has not come to aid the operations of nature, God has provided seeding times and seeding ways for himself. In desert districts, where tribes wander, and corn cannot be grown, God makes two plants grow freely, whose fruitage is a harvest of necessaries for the people. Local and temporary failures there have been; but they have been due to special causes acting but locally over certain districts; terrible oftentimes for the sufferings they cause, when men are isolated from their fellows, but ameliorated when men dwell together in brotherhood, and the overplus of one land can be used to supply the deficiencies of another. The chief causes of harvest failure are lack of rain, destruction of growing crops by caterpillar and locust, and war which prevents the proper seeding of the fields. A special cause of famine in Egypt was the failure of the Nile-flood.

I. GOD USES FAMINE TO KEEP UP MEN'S DEPENDENCE ON HIM. A tale is told of a widow woman who had lived for many years rent free in a cottage, through the good will and kindly arrangement of the owner. She lived in it so long that she came to think the place was her own, and quite forgot her dependent condition; so far forgot herself, indeed, as to send a message to her landlord threatening to leave the house if some repairs were not at once attended to. It might have been good for the poor woman to let her feel homeless for a while, so that she might learn to value her mercies. But we, like her, are in great danger of presuming on the goodness of God. We also get the feeling of a right to the things which God freely and graciously bestows. We call them *ours*. And then the temporary loss of them wakens us to thought; humbles us in the dust; calls upon us to look on the fields, and say, "They are God's, not ours;" and on the sunny skies and genial rain, and say, "They are God's, not ours." "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

II. GOD USES FAMINE AS AN AGENT FOR PUNISHMENT. No man is able to say of any particular famine, it *must* be a punishment; but we have a perfect right to say, famine *may be* a punishment. When God would visit David's sin in numbering the people for his own vain-glorious purposes, he offered him a choice which included "seven years of famine for thy land." In the reign of Ahab the violent adoption of Baalism was visited by a terrible famine for the humbling of the wilful king. And still we must keep hold of this truth—all outward calamities *may be* visitations of Divine wrath. It settles nothing to say that pestilence follows on man's disobedience of sanitary laws; and famine results from deficient government and hindered commerce; and wars spring out of national ambitions. That is all quite true, but we thus deal only with "second causes." God is still the First Cause. We, at least, will not push God out of the world he has made. We will trace his working everywhere. And just as we know he orders our personal circumstances so that they shall be chastisement and correction for our personal mistakes, wilfulnesses, and transgressions, so we will be sure that the sins of cities, communities, and nations bring judgments and corrections by public calamities; famine may be the hand of the Almighty raised to smite and humble sinful peoples.

III. GOD USES FAMINE TO KNIT THE LANDS IN BROTHERHOOD. In the older times of famine in Egypt, other nations and tribes were compelled to visit that land to secure their supplies of food, and so everybody became interested in the preservation of peace and kindly relations. The common distress made even hostile tribes forget their enmities. In the present day it is essential to the well-being of every nation that universal peace should be preserved. Every country is interested in keeping a free way for the world's ships over the oceans. War is a calamity. The strong men who are slaughtered on battle-fields, ought to be toiling at the harvests, growing the world's food, carrying it from land to land, or making the things which should supply the world's ever-varying and multiplied needs. We are dependent, as nations, on one another, and our mutual dependence ought to culture a spirit of brotherhood. England cannot grow from her soil, as at present cultivated, the supply of all her people's needs. Heavily laden grain-ships bring the bounty of other lands for our relief week by week throughout the year; and so intercourse is maintained. We get to know and respect each other; we even, in a sense, sit down at each other's tables; we eat bread and salt together, and so are bound to one another in eternal amity, as are the desert tribes. We eat bread from America, and Russia, and Hungary, and Egypt, and other parts, and at

the common feast we cultivate the common brotherhood. And it may be further said, nothing binds men together and breaks down prejudices and enmities like a common trouble. How we are drawn together when a common woe lies upon our town, or upon the community to which we belong! Mutual sympathy and mutual sacrifice make us feel that God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;" and that brothers of the one family, whose Head is the everlasting Father, may well be brotherly and kind. In conclusion, gathering up what has been illustrated and enforced, it may be shown that (1) famine makes a public testimony for the one, living God; (2) famine, reaching to affect all classes, makes this testimony everywhere; and (3) famine becomes everywhere a test of characters and beliefs.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The evil of childish rulers.* "Babes shall rule over them." No greater calamity can come on a nation than the succession of mere children to the throne, and government by regency and party. Ahaz ascended the throne at the age of twenty (2 Chron. xxviii. 1). Manasseh at age of twelve; Josiah at age of eight (2 Chron. xxxiii. 1; xxxiv. 1). The evil was, of course, exaggerated in Eastern countries, where kings are irresponsible despots. "In an Eastern monarchy the rule of a young king, rash and without experience, guided by counsellors like himself, was naturally regarded as the greatest of evils, and the history of Rehoboam had impressed this truth on the mind of every Israelite." "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child" (Eccles. x. 16). When the strong men and wise men are removed by disease and calamity, weaklings get into office and place of authority, and surely create fresh evils by their incapacity.

I. THE EVIL OF RULERS WHO ARE CHILDREN IN AGE. Such, being unable to decide and act for themselves, are dependent on court advisers; so there is every opportunity for court intrigue, rivalry of parties, and the sacrifice of national interests to party advantage. Under weak governments class is set against class. Illustrate the petulance of boys in the exercise of assumed authority. It comes out even in their play. In old times young kings were under the supreme influence of the queen-mother, and she might be a Jezebel or an Athaliah. The most anxious times of English history are times of regency.

II. THE EVIL OF RULERS WHO ARE CHILDREN IN UNDERSTANDING. Such as Rehoboam. The evil is qualified in constitutional countries; but even in them the king gives tone to society. It has often been a consequence of war that a land has been left to the government of the incompetent. Corruption at court has sometimes led the best men to retire from the government. Under such inefficient rule, in an Eastern kingdom, all is chaotic and anarchic; there is a condition which can only be fittingly represented by the Turkey or Egypt of our own times. Apply to the small kingdoms of (1) society, (2) friendship, (3) families, and urge the importance, to the well-being of a nation, of manly men, and manly, strong, wisely ruling fathers.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The secret of national ruin.* "Their tongue and their doings are against the Lord." This is given distinctly as the reason and the explanation of the ruin of Judah. The prophet goes right past all accidents and all national events, and fixes on the moral cause of the ruin. A nation is bad at the core when it can doubt and dishonour God; and no such nation can stand long. God will surely arise to vindicate himself and to shake terribly the earth. Isaiah uses a singular figure: "To provoke the eyes of his glory." The offence which wilfulness and iniquity give to the holiness of God is compared to the sensitiveness of the human eye. Matthew Henry says, "In word and action they brake the Law of God, and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice. Their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, for they acted as they talked. It was an aggravation of their sin that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them; but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame."

I. REBELLIOUS SPEECH A CORRUPTING FORCE. Apply to boastful, self-conceited speech; the speech of the masterful and ambitious man. Apply to the influence of the infidel lecturer, or infidel literature. The young especially are carried away by it to

self-indulgence, and find in it excuse for vicious practices. Infidelity never lays foundations for virtue to build on. It is ever the substratum of vice. Illustrate from the French Revolution.

II. REBELLIOUS DEEDS A CALL FOR JUDGMENT. The bad deeds are the proper fruitage of bad speech. Illustrate by the evil work of the demagogue. Break down the sacred restraints of faith in God, and evils rush in like a flood. When man feels free to do what he likes, his likes are sure to be bad ones. Impress that no account of a man's ruin, or a nation's ruin, will suffice which deals only with his circumstances. Nobody was ever ruined by accident. Man's tongue and doings will always provide the explanation of his extreme calamities.—R. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Messages to the righteous and the wicked.* These verses are parenthetical. "They assert the doctrine of 'future rewards and punishment' in a spiritual and not a mechanical sense. Good deeds ripen into happiness, as evil deeds into misery" (Cheyne). The point of impression may be stated thus—

I. TO THE RIGHTEOUS—GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE NOT INDISCRIMINATE.

II. TO THE WICKED—GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE INEVITABLE. "The pious are graciously assured, that in the worst of times, and under the most trying circumstances, God will be their Friend and Rewarder; while the ungodly are equally assured that they shall suffer merited punishment" (Henderson). Compare the Divine pleadings with Cain (Gen. iv. 7), and Abraham's pleading over guilty Sodom (Gen. xviii. 25). See Asaph's perplexity because it was so often ill with the righteous, and well with the wicked (Ps. lxxiii.). How can God answer those who, looking cursorily upon life, say that the earthly lot of the righteous and of the wicked is very much the same? His answer may be set forth under the following divisions. 1. God cares for the righteous, and has some kind purpose towards them in letting them suffer. 2. The righteous should be willing to accept of a share of suffering, which aims at the correction and salvation of the many. 3. God keeps the conscience of the righteous quiet under suffering, and so he does not feel its real bitterness. 4. God *can* keep the righteous from sharing suffering if it pleases him so to do, just as he saved Israel in Goshen from the plagues that smote the rest of Egypt. To the wicked God's judgments have a bitter sting, for they are conscious of the connection between their sins and their judgments, unless conscience is utterly dead, and then there must come for them an awful day of awakening. And if the wicked do escape calamities here, there is the inevitable day coming when he must receive "according to the deeds done in his body."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Grinding the faces of the poor.* Two figures are here employed: "Beat my people to pieces;" "Grind the faces of the poor." One of these may help to the understanding of the other. Both deal with the tyrannies of masters, and may be illustrated by the cruel treatment of *slaves* in the old slave-holding times. J. A. Alexander explains the figures thus: "Crush my people is a common figure for severe oppression (Job v. 4; Prov. xxii. 22). Grind the faces upon the ground, by trampling on their prostrate bodies, is also another strong figure for contemptuous and oppressive violence." Ewald thinks blows or wounds in the face may be referred to. The figure may be taken from the threshing-sled, a cart without wheels, having pieces of flint and iron on the under side, which was drawn by oxen over the heap of wheat, grinding the grains. So the exactions and forced labours to which the poor were subject was making lines and furrows in their faces by their grinding influence. The figure may be illustrated by the condition of the wretched *fellahin* in Egypt, who are ground with taxation until life has become a burden. Matthew Henry gives two suggestions by way of explanation. "You put them to as much pain and terror as if they were ground in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another." "Their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but have given them personal abuses." Roberts gives specimens of similar proverbial expressions current in India. "Ah! my lord, do not thus crush my face. Alas! alas! my nose and other features will soon be rubbed away. Is my face to be made quite flat with grinding?" "That head man has been grinding the faces of all his people." The opposite figure to this is to "smooth the face," meaning to "court or flatter."

I. MAN'S CRUELTY TO THE POOR. Illustrate the condition of poor people in Eastern lands. They are the first to suffer in times of national calamity, pestilence, famine, or war. The selfishness induced by national distress is seen in the neglect and ill treatment of the poor. Weak governments make cruel exactions from the poor. Lordly and rich men too often crush the poor. Slave countries have awful records of cruelty to the slave poor. Forced labour has, in many lands, embittered the lot of the poor. Now the evil is rather selfish neglect than open cruelty. Rich and poor are separated by wide class distinctions, and the poor are too often left in their misery to perish.

II. GOD'S CARE FOR THE POOR. Seen in his counsels respecting the treatment of them, in his own wondrous ways of providing for them, and in the relation of his manifested Son to them. Of him this was the characteristic, "Blessed are the poor;" "To the poor the gospel is preached."

III. MAN'S CONCERN FOR THE POOR WHEN HE BECOMES GOD-LIKE. Then he strives to feel as Christ felt, and to act as Christ acts. See the spirit of pious Job (Job xxix.), and compare Barnabas and Dorcas. The regenerate man cannot fail to interest himself in those who are needy, or in trouble. The good man deals justly and kindly and thoughtfully with the lowly folk who serve him. Grinding the face of the poor is an absolute impossibility to any man who has "the mind of Christ."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Dress and character.* The Word of God has sometimes things to say which it cannot be satisfied to address generally to mankind; it requires a more direct superscription for its message, and writes to men, to women, even sometimes to wives, maidens, mothers, widows, children. In the effort of Isaiah to produce a deep and general conviction of the national sin and disgrace and impending ruin, he singles out the women of that day; he bids us trace the influence of a godless luxury in their vain dressing, frivolous manners, and overloaded ornamentation and jewellery. He intimates that the nobler qualities of womanly mind and character were being lost in this great increase of frivolity and vanity; and he sets us upon imagining not only the present degradation of the land, but the yet deeper degradation that must come, the utter ruin of the generation that owned such women as mothers. Hallam says, "The love of becoming ornament is not perhaps to be regarded in the light of vanity; it is rather an instinct which woman has received from nature to give effect to those charms which are her defence; and when commerce began to minister more efficiently to the wants of luxury, the rich furs of the north, the gay silks of Asia, the wrought gold of domestic manufacture, illumined the halls of chivalry, and cast, as if by the spell of enchantment, that ineffable grace over beauty which the choice and arrangement of dress is calculated to bestow." God cannot be especially pleased with a clothing of wearisome drab; and he must know that when bright colours are forsworn, the vanity of the human heart will still find expression in shape and pattern. He is ever dressing the brown earth in garments of grass and flower, pluming the wings of his birds with varied tints; and making gorgeous with bars of gold and crimson and blue the sky at sunsetting. There are a few simple rules of dress which at once commend themselves to Christian judgment.

I. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD DRESS WITHIN REASONABLE EXPENSE. What is reasonable expense can never be settled by figures; it must always be left to individual decision; the utmost carefulness of one person may, relative to station, appear censurable extravagance to another person. But we may say this: any expenditure is unreasonable which deprives us of the means for meeting those higher claims which may be made upon us—claims of (1) food, (2) family, (3) education, (4) hospitality, (5) charity, or (6) religion. And all expenditure on luxurious dress is unreasonable, which prevents our laying aside something against the calamities, diseases, and old age of the future. Above all, dressing which involves the spending of money which belongs to our creditors is a lie towards men, and an insult to God. Archbishop Leighton says, "Excessive costliness argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet the poor of their charity, which in God's sight is a due debt too; and far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death-bed, to remember that at such a time, instead of putting lace on my own back, I helped a naked back to clothing."

II. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD DRESS ACCORDING TO THE BEST STANDARDS OF TASTE. Best, not necessarily newest. These you will discover, not by observing persons who

are foremost in fashion, but by observing those persons for whom you have the most real respect. Whatever may be the class of society to which you belong, you can discern, within the limits of your sphere, the contrast between the dress of the shallow, the frivolous, and vain, and the dress of the thoughtful, the humble, and the worthy. Peter gives an idea of the standard of taste, in 1 Pet. iii. 3—5.

III. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD DRESS SUITABLY TO THE SPHERE IN LIFE WHICH SHE OCCUPIES, AND THE CLASS OF SOCIETY TO WHICH SHE BELONGS. If you do not act thus, you make yourself a caricature; you must be a hypocrite, trying to deceive people into the idea that you are what you know that you are not. Most people easily read the disguise, and put a low estimate on the persons who foolishly resort to it. We honour the men and women who bravely say, "My sphere in life may be humble, but it is honest, and therefore it is honourable. I am not ashamed to dress according to it. I can occupy my place, and look just myself, with the smile of God, and the approbation of all good men, upon me." Let servants dress as servants, maidens as maidens, married women as married, and the aged as aged. Each to herself be true.

IV. A CHRISTIAN SHOULD DRESS SO AS TO SERVE GOD BY HER DRESS. Our dress has an influence on others—on those in our station, on those in classes of society below us, and on the children we meet. This mode of influence is to be laid in service on the Lord's altar. Two points may be impressed from these considerations. 1. *Dress reveals character.* This is true of the character of each *individual.* We often take our notions of a person from her dress. Carelessness, untidiness, and uncleanliness, things which are very nearly akin to ungodliness, are revealed only by looking at some, so-called, well-dressed people. Self-conceit, passion, and temper are exhibited in others. Sometimes we see persons of whom we think very pityingly. Poor creatures! There is little inside the coxy dress but vanity, pride, and worldliness. And others as certainly tells us of the inward modesty, the delicacy, seriousness, refinement of their souls. Burns sings—

> "Oh, wad some poo'er the giftie gie us,
> To see o'orsels as ithers see us!"

And many of us have longed for the courage to tell others around us the impression which their dress was making upon us. If the looking-glass could speak, what surprising revelations it would make! It is true also of *nations;* dress is characteristic. It is true of towns and districts in our own land. In some parts of our country, where wages are good, and imitation finery is cheap, we find sharp contrasts of colour, commonness of material, rude bold shapes, and overloading of tinsel. In other parts where work is concerned with the more necessary articles required for man's use, the taste is sober, the quality good, and ornamentation refined. 2. *Dress cultures character.* A woman feels right when she is well dressed, and in a sense is kept right by her dress. The beautiful in appearance wants the beautiful in conduct to match it. Plato says, "Behaviour, and not gold, is the ornament of woman. For a woman who wishes to enjoy the favour of one man, good behaviour is the proper ornament, and not dresses. You should have the blush upon your countenance, which is the sign of modesty, instead of paint, and worth and sobriety instead of gold and emeralds."—R. T.

Vers. 25, 26.—*National evil in the loss of male population.* The destruction of the males in war is the cause of the extreme grief and helpless desolation of womanhood. The figure is intense when read in the light of the condition of unprotected woman in Eastern countries. "In the East of antiquity, as in many Eastern lands to this day, the position of an unmarried woman, whether maid or widow, was a very unhappy and perilous one. Only in the house of a husband could a woman be sure of respect and protection. Hence the Hebrews spoke of the husband's house as a woman's *menuchah,* or 'rest'—her secure and happy asylum from servitude, neglect, licence" (S. Cox). In the verses before us the effect of the slaughter of the males on the community is described. The chief places of concourse are full of desolate, wailing women; and the state or nation is then personified as a desolate widow seated on the ground, a sign both of mourning and degradation. For illustration of the figure, see Vespasian's coin. The device on it is a woman, disconsolate, in a sitting posture, leaning against a palm tree, and the legend is "*Judæa capta.*" As a modern illustration take the

calamity which came upon France through the series of revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The conscription swept off the males; the age for soldiers, and standard height, were again and again reduced, until even the nation's youths were destroyed; and it has taken years to recover the national strength.

I. A NATION'S STRONG MEN ARE HER PRESENT JOY. They work well in the factory. They advise well in the council. They ensure healthy and strong populations.

II. A NATION'S STRONG MEN ARE HER DEFENCE. They ensure her respect abroad. They preserve her when attacked. They keep off disease by their vitality.

III. A NATION'S STRONG MEN ARE HER HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. They put strength into government, art, science, literature, labour. Health is energy. A nation's hope lies in this being the description of her sons—*mens sana in corpore sano.* Then what a national calamity war is! It takes a nation's manhood. We may well "seek peace and ensue it," for it keeps our manhood.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

The existing division between ch. iii. and iv. is scarcely satisfactory. Ver. 1 of ch. iv. belongs to the minatory portion of the section beginning with ch. ii. 1 and terminating with ch. iv. 6, and so stands connected in subject with ch. iii., which is wholly minatory; whereas the remainder of ch. iv. (vers. 2—6) is consolatory, consisting of a series of promises. Ch. iv. 1 is also formally connected with ch. iii. by the *vau* conjunctive, while the absence of any such link at the opening of ver. 2 indicates the commencement of a new paragraph at that point.

Ver. 1.—**Seven women shall take hold of one man.** This verse has been well called a "companion picture to ch. iii. 6, 7." As there, in the evil time of God's judgment, the despairing men are represented as "taking hold" of a respectable man to make him their judge, so now the despairing women "take hold" of such a man and request him to allow them all to be regarded as his wives. There has been such a destruction—men are become so scarce—that no otherwise can women escape the shame and reproach of being unwedded and childless. **Our own bread will we eat.** They do not ask him to support them; they are able and willing to support themselves. **To take away**; rather, *take thou away*—the imperative mood, not the infinitive. **Our reproach.** Children were regarded as such a blessing in the ancient times that to be childless was a misfortune and a subject of reproach. Hagar "despised" the barren Sarai (Gen. xvi. 4). Her "adversary provoked Hannah sore, because the Lord had shut up her womb" (1 Sam. i. 6). Compare the lament of Antigoné, who views it as a disgrace that she descends to the tomb unwed (Soph., 'Antig.,' ll. 813—816). Among the Jews childlessness was a special reproach, because it took away all possibility of the woman being in the line of the Messiah's descent (comp. ch. liv. 1—4).

Vers. 2—6.—As the present prophecy (ch. ii.—iv.), though in the main one of threatening and denunciation, opened with a picture that was encouraging and comforting (ch. ii. 2—4), so now it terminates with a similar picture. The evangelical prophet, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, is unwilling that any one should be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." He will not separate the mercies of God from his judgments.

Ver. 2.—**In that day shall the branch of the Lord,** etc. Some see in this passage merely a promise that in the Messianic times the produce of the soil would become more abundant than ever before, its harvests richer, and its fruitage more luxuriant. But in the light of later prophecy it is scarcely possible to shut up the meaning within such narrow limits. The "Branch" of Isaiah can hardly be isolated altogether in a sound exegesis from the "Branch" of Jeremiah (xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15) and of Zechariah (iii. 8; vi. 12). Now, the "Branch" of Zechariah is stated to be "a man" (vi. 12: note that the word used for "Branch" is the same as Isaiah's, viz. *tsemakh*), and the "Branch" of Jeremiah is a King (xxxiii. 15). Moreover, Isaiah uses a nearly equivalent term (*nêtser*) in an admittedly Messianic sense. Although, therefore, there is some obscurity in the phrase, "Branch *of Jehovah*," it would seem to be best to understand Isaiah as here intimating, what he elsewhere openly declares (ch. xi. 1—5)—viz. the coming of the Messiah in the latter days as the ornament and glory of his people. **Be beautiful and glorious**; rather, *for beauty and glory*; or, *for ornament and glory*; i.e. for the ornament and glorification of Israel

And the fruit of the earth. It is argued with reason that the two clauses of this verse are parallel, not antithetical, and that as we understand the one, so must we understand the other. If, then, the "Branch" is the Messiah, so is "the fruit of the earth"—which may well be, since he was "the grain of wheat" which "fell into the ground and died, and so brought forth much fruit" (John xii. 24). **Excellent and comely**; rather, *for majesty and beauty* (comp. Exod. xxviii. 2, 40). **Unto the escaped of Israel**; *i.e.* "to those who shall have survived the great calamity, and become citizens of the restored Jerusalem." Dr. Kay well remarks that "the prophecy was adequately fulfilled only in those who 'saved themselves' from the generation which rejected Christ. That remnant was the germ of the Catholic Church, made such by being incorporated into the true Vine" ('Speaker's Commentary,' note *ad loc.*).

Ver. 3.—**He that is left . . . he that remaineth.** Equivalent to the "escaped" of the preceding verse. **Shall be called holy.** Strikingly fulfilled in the fact that the early Christians were known as ἅγιοι, "holy," or κλητοὶ ἅγιοι, "those called to be holy," in the first age (Acts ix. 13, 32, 41; xxvi. 10; Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; Phil. i. 1, etc.). Perhaps, however, more is meant than this. The early Christians not only were called, but were "holy." Even Gibbon places the innocent lives of the early Christians among the causes of the conversion of the Roman empire. **Every one that is written among the living.** A register of the "living," or "heirs of life," is here assumed, as in Exod. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxix. 28; Dan. xii. 1; Rev. xiii. 8; xxi. 27, etc. It is a "book," however, out of which names may be "blotted" (Rev. iii. 5).

Ver. 4.—**When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion** (see ch. iii. 16—24). Sin must not be merely repented of and pardoned; it must be put away. There could be no Jerusalem, in which all should be "called holy," until the moral defilement of the daughters of Zion was swept away. **Purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst** (comp. ch. i. 15; lix. 3). It is possible, however, that the murder of infants in sacrifice to Moloch may be in the prophet's mind. Ahaz "burnt his children in the fire after the abominations of the heathen" (2 Chron. xxviii. 3). Manasseh did the same (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6); and the practice was probably widespread among the people long before Isaiah's time (see Ps. cvi. 38; ch. lvii. 5). **By the spirit of burning**; or, *by a blast of burning*; i.e. a fiery blast which shall destroy everything (comp. ch. i. 31).

Ver. 5. — **Upon every dwelling-place** ("over the whole habitation," Revised Version). Mr. Cheyne translates "upon the whole site," and takes the "site" to be especially the temple. *Makôn* seems certainly never to be used for anything but "God's dwelling-place" (Exod. xv. 17; 1 Kings viii. 13, 39, etc.; 2 Chron. vi. 2, 30, etc.; Ezra ii. 68; Ps. xxxiii. 14; lxxxix. 14; xcvii. 2; civ. 5; ch. xviii. 4; Dan. viii. 11). Perhaps, however, *every* dwelling-place of God, *i.e.* every Christian Church, is intended. On these, and on all Christian assemblies, there will rest a new presence of God—one which he will have "created;" recalling that of the pillar of fire and of cloud which rested in the wilderness on the Jewish tabernacle (Exod. xxxiii. 9; xl. 34—38, etc.). **A cloud and smoke by day.** The "pillar of the cloud" is never said in the Pentateuch to have been one of "smoke;" but Sinai "smoked" when God descended on it (Exod. xix. 18; xx. 18), and the psalmist speaks of a "smoke" as issuing out of God's nostrils (Ps. xviii. 8). In the poetry of Isaiah, "smoke," no less than "cloud," symbolizes God's presence (see ch. vi. 4). **Upon all the glory** shall be a defence; rather, as in the margin, *a covering*. Over all the glory of Zion, its purged temple and its purified assemblies, the presence of God shall rest like a canopy, protecting it.

Ver. 6.—**And there shall be**, etc.; rather, *and it* (i.e. "the canopy") *shall be a tabernacle, or bower, a shelter from the sun's heat by day, and from storm and rain both by day and night.* The metaphors need no explanation.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2—6.—*The glories of the restored Church.* Three principal glories are here noted by the prophet as belonging to "that day"—the day of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem for their manifold sins, and of restoration and re-establishment of the mountain of God's Church at the head of the mountains (ch. ii. 2). These are (1) the coming of Messiah in person for ornament and glory, for majesty and beauty, to be the admiration and delight of his people; (2) the purity and holiness of the persons who constitute the restored Church; and (3) the continuity of the presence of God with his Church from the time of its re-establishment, and the security consequent upon his

protection. At all periods of its existence, the Church will do well to bear in mind that these are its special glories, and to make each a subject of frequent thought and meditation.

I. THE COMING OF MESSIAH TO FOUND HIS CHURCH LIES AT THE ROOT OF ALL. The glorious "Branch"—the new shoot of the house of David (ch. xi. 1)—which sprang from the old stock, and grew up "like a tree planted by the water-side, which bringeth forth its fruit in due season, the leaf whereof shall not wither" (Ps. i. 3), had first to come and to dwell with man, and to reveal himself, in his glory and majesty and beauty, as the perfect moral Being, the pattern Man, after whom all should shape their lives, before a *holy* Church, a Church of "saints," could be set up on earth, or men could know in what true holiness and righteousness consisted. The "Branch" came, "beautiful and glorious, excellent and comely," "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Cant. v. 10), "his eyes as the eyes of doves" (ver. 12), "his lips dropping sweet-smelling myrrh" (ver. 13), "his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars, his mouth most sweet," yea, he himself "altogether lovely" (vers. 15, 16); and the earth saw what it had never seen before—absolutely perfect humanity. Nor was this the whole. He who set the perfect pattern made also the perfect atonement; "washed away the filth" of sin (ch. iv. 4); "purified to himself a peculiar people" (Titus ii. 14); made holiness possible to man, who was "very far gone from original righteousness," corrupt, "sold under sin" (Rom. vii. 14). Thus the first glory fitly introduces the second—

II. THE HOLINESS OF THOSE WHO ARE TRUE MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH. "Holiness becometh God's house for ever" (Ps. xciii. 5); "Without holiness shall no man see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14). Christians are holy by profession, by call, by obligation; if they will, by life and act. Not, indeed, holy in the highest sense; not as they ought to be; not "as he is holy" (1 Pet. i. 15); for "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). But still "holy" in a real sense; ever striving to be holy, ever repenting, ever seeking and obtaining forgiveness, ever washed afresh in the blood of Christ, which "cleanseth from all sin" (1 John i. 7). The unholy, who "persist in sin" without striving against it, are no true members of the Church of Christ, but false pretenders to membership, "strangers to Christ's covenant, and aliens from his commonwealth" (Eph. ii. 12). The real Church is "holy," as it is called in the Apostles' Creed; deriving its holiness ever from him who is its Life, from whom it receives continually fresh supplies of grace, and fresh power to resist temptation. The holiness of the Church is thus dependent on the presence of God with it; and the second glory leads naturally to the consideration of the third—

III. THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS CHURCH, AND HIS CONTINUED PROTECTION OF IT. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is the most precious promise of the New Testament. Christ is with his Church (1) in her sacred buildings, when common prayer is made (Matt. xiii. 19) and sacraments are administered; (2) in her synods, when doctrine is formulated and false teaching exposed and condemned (Matt. xviii. 17); and (3) in the secret chamber of each one of her members, when approach is made to the throne of grace, and confession poured forth or prayer offered to God through Christ. In this presence is the Church's sole trust. Without it she would be powerless against the world, and against Satan. With it she may contemn all attacks. Satan can do her no harm, for "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her" (Matt. xvi. 18). The world cannot hurt her, for he who is her Protector "has overcome the world" (John xvi. 33). Safe under his protection, nestling under the shadow of his wings, she is safe both by day and night; whether the scorching fire of persecution seeks her destruction, as in the early times, or whether, as now, the murky night of agnostic criticism closes around her and endeavours to affright her with its shadows.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2—6.—*Glimpse of future prosperity.* There will come a day when the cleansing fire will have run its course through the spiritual field, consuming the tares. The impurity of licentious luxury will have been washed away, the stain of blood effaced

from Judah's rulers (ch. iii. 14; comp. ch. i. 25; vi. 13; Matt. iii. 11). Then, and then only, can the glorious day come in the vision of which the prophet exults.

I. NATIONAL CONDITIONS OF PROSPERITY. "The shoot of Jehovah will be for adornment and honour." *Erit germen Domini in magnificentia et gloria.* The rich fertility of the land is compared to a new sprouting growth, caused by the creative energy of God. When the Spirit of God is felt to be operative in the life of a people, then, and then only, can its life be both strong and beautiful. See, again, this thought in ch. xxviii. 5: he will be as a "crown of glory and diadem of beauty" to the residue of his people. "*Then* shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures" (ch. xxx. 23). "In *that day* the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim" (Joel iii. 18). "*Behold, the days come*, saith Jehovah, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. . . . They shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God" (Amos ix. 13—15). "I will sow her unto me in the earth" (Hos. ii. 23). Glowing pictures! Israel's golden age ever is in the future. And for all who "hope in God," the "good old times," the "Saturnian reign," is coming again. *Magnus ab integro sæclorum nascitur ordo.* The hard oaks shall again sweat with the dewy honey; our sweetest dreams become a solid fact. "From me is thy fruit found" (Hos. xiv. 8).

II. PERSONAL CONDITIONS OF PROSPERITY. The one condition is personal holiness. "Every relict in Zion, and every one remaining in Jerusalem, will be called a saint; every one who has been written among the living in Jerusalem." Profound thought! the holy man alone is the living man. Matter is death; spirit is exemption from the rule of matter. Holiness is victory over matter—in its lower form, fleshly cleanliness; in its higher, the purity of self-consistent truth that will not mix with what is alien to itself.

III. VISIBLE GLORIES. Upon every home on Mount Zion, and every place of prayer, there will be the cloud by day, and the fume and splendour of flaming fire by night; over all the glory a protection. "Wherever there is true spiritual exaltation and majesty, there is around it a covering and protection which keeps the world away from it." "There's a divinity doth hedge a king." We cannot constantly bear the splendour; we need the cool calm commonplaces of life to resort to when our eyes are wearied with the glare of highest truth. And we may find the "calm retreat, the silent shade," of religious life no less welcome than the mount of glory and of vision. From the storm and rain we may find a refuge in the "secret place of the Most High."—J.

Ver. 1.—*Depopulation and its doctrine.* This passage belongs to the two concluding verses of the last chapter; but as it is the most striking of the three, we may allow it to be our starting-point in gleaning the thoughts which the whole scene suggests. These are—

I. EXTREME DESOLATION WROUGHT IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. The land is stripped by war of its male population (ch. iii. 25); those who gather at the gates bewail the humiliation under which they smart, the privation to which they are reduced. "Her gates shall lament," etc. (ch. iii. 26). Jerusalem can no longer stand in her strength and honour; she is prostrate in weakness and in her shame; desolate, she sits upon the ground. Such is the havoc which war has made, that the virgin daughters of the land, instead of waiting modestly to be addressed, go out in numbers to find themselves husbands under any unnatural condition, so that the reproach of perpetual virginity and childlessness may be somehow removed (text). In the righteous rule of God, sin ends in utter desolation. It may be *the history of the nation*, as in this instance. Its stages are these: departure from the will and Word of God; luxury and corruption; effeminacy and weakness; strife and defeat; exile, poverty, loneliness, attempts to gratify hope and ambition by unnatural and pitiable methods. But this

may be *the experience of the individual.* "Evil shall slay the wicked, and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate" (Ps. xxxiv. 21). Sin is likely, if indeed it is not sure, to lead down to this sad estate. It manifests itself in folly and, through folly, conducts to loss, privation, loneliness, desolation. And the last scene of all is one like this of the text; it resorts to unnatural and wholly unsatisfactory means to fill its heart and restore its life.

II. A SIGNIFICANT PROVISION ORDERED IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD. The abnormal circumstance suggests the normal. In the absence of such a scourge as that of war—and for this our sin is entirely responsible—there would be found to be a virtual equality in the number of the sexes. For nearly every son of man a daughter is born into the world. Surely this points to the Divine intention that man and wife should dwell together in bonds of conjugal affection. It places no stigma on single life, but it indicates the purpose of our kind Creator, that one human heart should comfort and sustain another, with reciprocated love and complementary succour, along the path of human life. It says to those who have ears to hear it that polygamy is not according to the Divine will; that the celibacy of a class, or order, or community is not of Divine appointment; that the home where one husband and one wife dwell in undisturbed and ever-deepening attachment—the providing hand of the one clasping the dispensing hand of the other—is the realization of the Divine design.

III. AN HONOURABLE INSTINCT PLANTED BY THE HAND OF GOD. Similar passages (Gen. xxx. 23; 1 Sam. i. 6; ch. liv. 1; Luke i. 25) suggest that the "reproach" which the women desired to have removed was that of childlessness rather than that of virginity. Jewish women, we know, earnestly desired to be mothers; they may have cherished the hope that of them the Messiah would be born. In any case it was an honourable ambition. The real reproach rests with those who wish to be childless that they may be saved the anxieties, responsibilities, and labours that devolve on the faithful mother. There cannot be a more desirable or excellent aspiration for the parent to indulge than that of so training her (his) children that they shall become men and women whom the Lord will love, and for whom the Church and nation will give thanks.—C.

Vers. 2—4.—*Restoration.* It is uncertain whether there is a secondary allusion here to the coming of the Messiah; but it is certain that, in its primary sense, the passage refers to the condition of Judah after the return from exile. Treating it in this latter signification, we learn—

I. THAT THE END OF DIVINE JUDGMENT IS HUMAN TRANSFORMATION. (Ver. 4.) The Lord would "wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion . . . by the spirit [or, 'power'] of judgment." It may be that the righteous Ruler, as such, is bound to make penalty follow sin, *whatever may be the consequence to the individual transgressor.* But it is clear that, in the exercise of his judicial function, God seeks moral and spiritual renovation. He desires that the nation (the man) which is humbled and afflicted, shall be purified by the fires through which it (he) is passing. In the midst of the flame the offender may hear the voice from above saying, "Put away thy sin; return unto me; enter a new path; live the better life of righteousness, purity, devotion."

II. THAT THE NEW AND BETTER LIFE WILL BE AN ESSENTIALLY HOLY ONE. (Ver. 5.) "He that is left in Zion shall be called holy." Whether by him "that is left in Zion" we are to understand those that were never carried into captivity, or those that have returned, is of no importance; the reference is to Jews who have undergone humiliation and suffering, and who have been cleansed and purified thereby. These shall be possessors of life in its excellency and reality—"written among the living." Before, existence was nothing but existence; enlarged and ennobled by "the spirit of judgment," it has become *life;* and it "shall be called holy," because *it has become holy.* After a genuine repentance (national or individual) there comes a profound and enduring sanctity of spirit and of life. Old sin is abhorred, strenuously striven against, sedulously shunned. New graces and virtues are carefully cultivated and daily illustrated (see 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11; Ps. li. 7—11).

III. THAT THIS NEW LIFE WILL BE NOT ONLY ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, BUT EVEN ADMIRABLE IN HIS SIGHT. (Ver. 4.) The "branch of the Lord" *i.e.* the outgrowth of piety from the fallen nation, shall be "beauty and glory;" the produce of the land

(fruit of the earth), the worth which springs up from the restored nation, shall be excellency and ornamentation. The Holy One of Israel will not only accept the new national life thus presented to him; he will regard it with distinct, Divine satisfaction. And that which is pleasing in his sight will be attractive and excellent in the esteem of men. National and individual renovation is not only a thing which God accepts and acknowledges, worthy of our sanction; it is much more than that. It is beautiful, comely, even glorious. Here is: 1. Encouragement to the fallen. Let the nation, or the Church, or the individual soul which has fallen, which has felt the blow of the Divine hand, and which is understanding the Divine summons, rise and be renewed; there is a future before it of acceptable service, of beautiful and admirable excellency. 2. Inspiration for the devout worker. Let communities or let souls be reduced by sin and brought very low; let the judgment of God be heavy upon them; it is far from hopeless that they may rise again; from the fallen trunk may spring a living branch, beautiful to the sight and fruitful in every good word and work.—C.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Divine protection.* In strong, poetic terms the prophet intimates—

I. That God takes a Divine pleasure in his people. We know from other Scriptures that the Lord's portion is his people (Exod. xix. 5; Deut. xxxii. 9; Ps. xlvii. 4). Here the people of God are spoken of as "the glory" of the Lord (ver. 5). There are aspects in which it must appear to us the extreme point of Divine condescension to use such terms of his redeemed ones. But there are other aspects in which we can see that they are not altogether inappropriate. God's ancient people were, and his regenerated children are, the *witnesses and instances of his glorious redemption.* Redeemed from political or spiritual bondage, they rejoice in a blessed freedom; raised from dark depths of misery and despair, they sing the psalms of joy and hope; purged from vanity and folly, they walk in the ascending path of heavenly wisdom.

II. That God promises his people his Divine protection. "Upon all the glory shall be *a defence.*" As in the old desert days the tribes of Israel were led by the pillar of cloud by day and all the night by a pillar of fire, so shall the Divine Leader guide his people in the path which is still before them (ver. 5). From the burning heat and from the pelting storm there shall be found a covert for those who put their trust in him. God's promised defence extends: 1. To his people in their various relationships; whether gathered in the family "dwelling-place," or met in their sacred "assemblies," or, we may add, whether journeying in that solitariness of spirit with which we must all be familiar (Gal. vi. 5) along the path of life;—that is, in their domestic, ecclesiastical, and individual relations. 2. To his people in the checkered experiences of their career. God will be their defence from (1) the perils peculiar to prosperity (pride, selfishness, contemptuousness, worldliness, etc.)—there shall be "a shadow in the daytime from the heat;" and (2) the dangers incident to adversity (sullenness, rebelliousness, moroseness, despair, etc.)—there shall be "a covert from storm and from rain."

III. That these Divine promises are conditional on our continued obedience and believing prayer. God speaks peace unto his people, "but let them not turn again to folly" (Ps. lxxxv. 8; see Ezek. xxxiii. 13). The Divine promise proved good in this particular instance just so long and so far as the conditions which were implied were faithfully observed. God's promises are "exceeding great and precious," and we may "live thereby," *if we will.* But we must not fail (1) to walk in the way of his commandments, nor (2) to plead his Word in expectant prayer; if we do, we shall fail to enjoy in its fulness the defence of the "almighty arms."—C.

Ver. 1.—*Immortality in a continued race.* "Take thou away our reproach." This verse has been much misconceived. Its figures are Eastern, and their interpretation depends on our knowledge of the condition and sentiments of Eastern women. It is simply a forcible description of the calamities brought upon a nation by continued war. The men were to fall by the sword; and the slaughter was to be so great that the number of women should far exceed the number of men who should survive. Now, to be unmarried and childless is an occasion of the greatest reproach in the East; from the Jewish standpoint this was not only a great sorrow, but a great shame, implying, as was then thought, some sin of which it was the chastisement. And there was a yet

deeper sentiment concerning childlessness which needs to be taken into account. Immortality was, in those older days, thought of as a *family* rather than a personal privilege. A man lived on, lived again, in his descendants. Lange says, "In its most ancient parts the Old Testament knows no other genuine life than that on this earth, and thus no other continuation of living after death than by means of children. To be childless was, then, the same as being deprived of continuance after death. It corresponded to the being damned of the New Testament." In their distress and wretchedness the young women who had minced and flirted through Jerusalem with their gay clothing and fine trinkets, contrary to their natural modesty, would become suitors to the men, and under the hardest conditions seek the name and credit of wedlock, to be free from the reproach that would otherwise be their portion. Kimchi, the Jewish commentator, says this happened in the days of Ahaz, when Pekah, the son of Remaliah, slew in Judæa one hundred and twenty thousand men in one day. The widows which were left were so numerous that the prophet said, "Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas" (Jer. xv. 8). The idea that man's immortality is the continuance of the race has been revived and set attractively before the people in modern poetry and literature; and though it is only a small piece of the truth concerning man's future, a mere beginning in the revelation of man's immortality, we need not hesitate to recognize it as a partial truth, and to set before ourselves those views of the responsibility of our present lives which it suggests. We know that "life and immortality" for the individual have been "brought to light by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ," and in this fuller and higher and more satisfying revelation we heartily rejoice; but still we may learn something by occupying for a moment the older standpoint.

I. THE IMMORTALITY OF A NATION IS ITS PERMANENCY AS A FREE PEOPLE. This is illustrated by the anxiety of Eastern kings to secure *heirs* to their thrones and continuance to their dynasties. Divine judgments cut off kingly races, as that of Saul, Omri, etc. Divine promises assured that David's and Solomon's kingdoms should endure for ever. Nations, as such, have no immortality in a future state.

II. THE IMMORTALITY OF A GENERATION IS ITS REPRODUCTION IN SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS. "One generation passeth, and another cometh," and in a very true sense the next generation is the old one restored, under somewhat varying conditions. The *genius* of a generation is immortal only in the generations that follow it.

III. THE IMMORTALITY OF A MAN IS THE FAMILY HE STARTS. This explains the ambition to "found a family," which is not merely man's monument, but the man himself living again, and living on through the ages. He puts his personal impress upon his children, and the children's children keep alive the idiosyncrasy of the parent. Illustrate from the Abrahamic race, which is, in a sense, the immortality of Abraham.

IV. THE PRACTICAL BEARING OF SUCH A VIEW OF IMMORTALITY. Its fills with seriousness the position of all parents. "What manner of persons ought they to be," if they are thus to be perpetuated? A nation must be *righteous* if it is to be worth continuing. A generation must be physically and morally healthy, if its impress on the coming generations is to be a blessing. The father, the mother, must bear pure, true, worthy characters if their family is to be an honour. He who seeks an immortality in his race is bound to see to it that he only perpetuates goodness, integrity, truth, faith, and all things that are noble. From this lower position the preacher may easily advance to argue how much more solemn life has become for us now that nobler views of the future are revealed by him who came forth out of the eternal mysteries, and has passed again within them, that we might henceforth read our earth-lives in the light of that sublime personal immortality which he has disclosed.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The Divine and human Messiah.* This verse has been explained as a promise merely of the renewed fertility of the earth in God's day of restorings. That explanation is not, however, deep enough. It does not recognize how characteristic it was of the ancient prophets to refer to local and historical circumstances while their minds soared away to those Messianic pictures, which local incidents only suggested. The constant thought of the prophets was the ideal age and ideal person of Messiah, and we are right in detecting the expression of that thought everywhere. This verse

may be regarded as introducing the person by whom the Church is to be delivered and saved; and the terms employed appear to bear an intimation of his Divine and human natures. The figure of the "Branch" suggests his divinity (comp. Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12). The figure "fruit of the earth" suggests his humanity. That this may have been the thought of the prophet is indicated by the adjectives which are used. "Beautiful and glorious" are adjectives of admiration applied to Messiah, regarded as the "Branch." "Excellent and comely" are adjectives of appreciation and relation to us, and are applied to him regarded as the "fruit of the earth."

I. THE DIVINE MESSIAH CAN BE A SUFFICIENT REVEALER OF GOD. Illustrate from the way in which our Lord constantly urged that he only spoke the words given him by the Father, and only did the works of the Father.

II. THE HUMAN MESSIAH CAN BE IN SYMPATHY WITH MEN. Illustrate the "High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." In view of the troubles and distresses which Isaiah pictures, and which Messiah is to rectify, it is evident that he must be divinely strong if he is to master, heal, recover, cleanse, and bring on restored blessings; and it is equally evident that he must be human, to sympathize with and come helpfully near to those whom he would bless and save.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The roll of the living.* "Every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." For the figure of "Jehovah's book," or the "book of life," see Exod. xxxii. 32; Ps. lvi. 8; lxix. 28; Mal. iii. 16; Dan. xii. 1; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. xiii. 8; xxi. 27. Matthew Henry says, "Those that are kept alive in killing, dying times were written for life in the book of Divine providence; and shall we not suppose those who are rescued from a greater death to be such as were written in the Lamb's book of life?" We have a further description of them, which really explains their being on the roll; they are "called holy." Now, God never calls people what they are not. In olden times names were always significant, and expressed the personality to which they were applied; thus Jacob was called Israel, because he was a "prince." We have, then, two answering views of the godly man. Here he is "holy;" in heaven his name is in the "book of the living." Following this out in a meditative way, we dwell on—

I. THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT CHARACTER. In some sense he is "holy," for God calls him "holy." Illustrate the following senses in which we may be called "holy," even while we tarry amidst the human frailties: 1. Holy, as separated from self-service and the world's service. 2. Holy, as consecrated to God's service. 3. Holy, as called to pursue holiness. 4. Holy, as in some measure actually holy. 5. Holy, as standing in the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. THE BELIEVER'S ETERNAL SECURITY. Name is among the *living* ones. Illustrate: 1. The necessary permanence of all goodness. Evil can die; good can never die. Eternal life is in everything and every one who is good. 2. God rewards holiness with immortality. That is the "crown of life." Upon all goodness God's special favour and protection rests. 3. The holy are the natural citizens of the heavenly, which is the secure eternal home. How, then, can our names be written in the book of life? Illustrate (1) the way of regeneration; (2) the way of consecration; (3) the way of sanctification. If, through grace, we are numbered among the holy here, then one day the great voice will speak to us out of the heavenly and say, "He that is holy, let him be holy still."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*Christ's purified Church.* We are often addressing the truths revealed in Christ Jesus to the individual, but perhaps we unduly neglect their bearings on the Church as a whole which Christ has founded in the earth; those relations in which Christ himself stands to the Church, as the kingdom over which he is now actually ruling. It would be well for us distinctly to apprehend this truth, that the gospel only completes its work when, having renewed the individuals, it has also brought them into a fellowship of love and service one with another. The revelation which is made in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a revelation of our common sonship to God, and so of our common brotherhood one with the other. We can only reach to feel or to keep the full joy of our sonship through realizing and living out day by day our brotherhood. The best brothers are the best sons.

I. SOME DESCRIPTIONS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH are given us in the passage now before us. The Church is composed of those who are "escaped of Israel;" those, that is, who have come out from the world, and are separate; who have escaped through the rescuings of Divine mercy; who have been "plucked as brands from the burning." The bond uniting them together, and securing upon them the Divine blessing, is no personal peculiarity, no extraordinary goodness or attainment of their own. It is not that they, differing from all others, have been without sin, but that the Lord has redeemed them from sin; the mark of the Lord's rescue must be upon them all. They are the left ones, the preserved ones, the escaped ones, the monuments of Divine mercy. But the description should keep us from a serious mistake. They are not merely *delivered* ones; they are *escaped* ones, that word conveying the idea that their own energy has been put forth, their own will was in the escape. The hand of the angel was indeed upon them, but they also themselves hasted forth, and fled from the spiritual Sodom.

II. The text describes the CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S CHURCH. "Shall be called holy." The name thus put upon the Church is that of its most necessary and distinguishing quality. The term does not imply that each member has attained this holiness, but that each one has it in his heart as his great aim, and makes it, in his daily life, his great pursuit. "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." We are "called to be saints," and the central idea of holiness is not absolute purity, but separation from sin, and unto God; separation from the world, from self-seeking, self-indulgence, self-serving, from all forms and features of evil; and separation unto everything that is righteous and lovely and of good report. This, then, is to be the one distinction of the members of Christ's Church—the one thing which they are to maintain by their union together; their consecration unto God to the doing of his will; the choosing of what he will approve; the following whithersoever he may lead. The man who thus, in heart and life, is set on God, is in his measure a holy man, a saint. The Church which, in its collected life and labour, is thus set on God, is also in its measure a holy Church, made up of "saints and faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." The members of Christ's Church may properly be described as "a peculiar people." Not odd, but peculiar; as an angel from heaven would be if he dwelt among men; peculiar, as Christ was when he went to and fro among the people of Judæa. Nowadays we too often find the Church striving to rub away all the marks of her peculiarity. The question asked by those who have been "called to be saints" is—How near may we go towards the world? To what extent may we yield to its enticements? What of common earthly luxury and self-indulgence may we have without absolutely imperilling our eternal safety? While the Church asks such questions even in secret, and by its conduct and spirit rather than by its language, it is proved to be fallen—and falling—from the Divine standard. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."—R. T.

Vers. 4—6.—*Christ's gracious dealings with his Church.* In this passage they are presented under three forms: (1) as *cleansings*, (2) as *guidings*, (3) as *preservings*.

I. CHRIST IS EVER WORKING WITH A VIEW TO THE CLEANSING AND PURIFYING OF HIS CHURCH, so that it might be presented at last "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." That work of cleansing demands more constant watchfulfulness, care, and toil than we are wont to imagine. It requires that the Church, as a Church, shall pass again and again under Divine chastenings. We recognize how much the Lord does for us, as individuals, by the perplexities and disappointments and sorrows of our lives, but we do not so readily or so fully admit that such experiences are also needed for our Churches. Uninterrupted prosperities as surely imperil the life of the Christian Church as of the Christian man. Indulgences in sin hurt Churches. The neglect of Church duties, the spirit of idle contentment, growing tendency to self-satisfaction, disregard of holy living, and the encroachments of the worldly spirit, all hurt and spoil the Church. Under the influence of such things the light of the Church will as surely wax dim as the candle in a foul atmosphere; the witness of the Church will become fainter than a whisper; the unity of the Church will be broken up, and its work will lie about it untouched. The descriptions of the seven Churches of

Asia given in the Book of Revelation accurately present the conditions into which Churches still fall. Losing their first love. Yielding to the enticements of the world. Weakened by false doctrine. Deadened by the evil influence of unworthy members. Proud of outward prosperities. Lukewarm in Christian service. Surely the hope of the Church lies in this—Christ is willing to be in the midst of her in the power of his cleansing, correcting, and restoring grace, and he is actually dealing with her as a spirit of purifying. He is ever washing away the fast-gathering "filth of the daughters of Jerusalem, and the blood of her sins from the midst thereof." In accomplishing this work of cleansing, it may sometimes be needful that our Lord should deal severely. The operations of his grace will sometimes appear as a "spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning."

II. OUR LORD ALSO DEALS WITH HIS CHURCH WITH A VIEW TO ITS GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTION. He would have his people grow in grace and wisdom and knowledge, reaching ever further into the mysteries of revealed truth, and making ever holier and wiser expressions of their renewed spirit in all the spheres of their life and activity. Journeying through the wilderness of this world, through the wilderness of truths, and through the wilderness of Christian duties Christ is ever near now, as he was in the olden days to wandering Israel. Then a cloud-pillar, looking dark against the bright sky by day, and flashing out like flame against the dark sky by night, kept Israel in mind of its ever-present Guide. Now, without the help of such outward symbols, in inward manifestations to trustful hearts, Christ reveals his presence as our Shepherd, leading us on, now into scenes of conflict, now up paths that are rough and stony, and sometimes into "the green pastures, and beside the still waters." The power of a Church to hold fast the "truth once delivered unto the saints," and yet to receive whatever new forms of truth God may be pleased to unfold from his Word, lies in this presence of Christ with his Church, as a Teacher and Guide, as a "spirit of judgment."

III. CHRIST DEALS WITH HIS CHURCH WITH A VIEW TO ITS PRESERVATION AND ITS DEFENCE. He not only cleanses and teaches, he also *keeps*. "Upon all her glory shall be a defence." We may lovingly submit to all his chastenings and corrections, for over all the glory of his *cleansing* shall be his *defence*. It shall never be destructive. We shall be kept through it all. We may wait on all Divine teachings, and go forth to all Christian duties; perils may be round about us, but over all the glory of his *guiding* there shall be a defence. God shall keep us safely. His "mountains are round about Jerusalem from henceforth, and even for evermore." He does not mean by his dealings to remove the candlestick out of his place, only to make the flame burn clearer and brighter. He is but keeping it safe until the great time of removals, when it may take its place, and shine for ever among the lamps of the heavenly sanctuary.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Vers. 1—7.—ISRAEL REBUKED BY THE PARABLE OF A VINEYARD. This chapter stands in a certain sense alone, neither closely connected with what precedes nor with what follows, excepting that it breathes throughout a tone of denunciation. There is also a want of connection between its parts, the allegory of the first section being succeeded by a series of rebukes for sins, expressed in the plainest language, and the rebukes being followed by a threat of punishment, also expressed with plainness. The resemblance of the parable with which the chapter opens to one of those delivered by our Lord, and recorded in the three synoptic Gospels (Matt. xxi. 33—41; Mark xii. 1—9; Luke xx. 9—16), has been frequently noticed.

Ver. 1.—**Now will I sing to my Well-beloved.** The prophet sings to Jehovah a song concerning his vineyard. The song consists of eight lines, beginning with "My Well-beloved," and ending with "wild grapes." It is in a lively, dancing measure, very unlike the general style of Isaiah's poetry. The name "Well-beloved" seems to be taken by the prophet from the Song of Songs, where it occurs above twenty times. It well expresses the feeling of a loving soul towards its Creator and Redeemer. **A song of my Well-beloved.** Bishop Lowth translates "A song of loves," and Mr. Cheyne "A love-song;" but this requires an alteration of the text, and is

unsatisfactory from the fact that the song which follows is *not* a "love-song." May we not understand the words to mean "a song concerning my Well-beloved in respect of his vineyard"? **Touching his vineyard.** Israel is compared to a "vine" in the Psalms (Ps. lxxx. 8—16), and the Church of God to a "garden" in Canticles (iv. 12; v. 1); perhaps also to a "vineyard" in the same book (viii. 12). Isaiah may have had this last passage in his mind. **My Beloved hath a vineyard**; rather, *had a vineyard* (ἀμπελὼν ἐγενήθη τῷ ἠγαπημένῳ, LXX.). **In a very fruitful hill.** So the passage is generally understood, since *keren*, horn, is used for a height by the Arabs (as also by the Germans, *e.g.* Matterhorn, Wetterhorn, Aarhorn, etc.), and "son of oil" is a not unlikely Orientalism for "rich" or "fruitful." With the "hill" of this passage compare the "mountain" of ch. ii. 2, both passages indicating that the Church of God is set on an eminence, and "cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14).

Ver. 2.—**He fenced it.** So the LXX., the Vulgate, Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Rosenmüller, Lowth, Kay. Gesenius, Knobel, and Mr. Cheyne prefer to translate, "he dug it over;" while the Revisers of 1885 have suggested, "he made a trench about it." The word occurs only in this place, and has no cognates in Hebrew. **And gathered out the stones** (comp. ch. lxii. 10). In the stony soil of Palestine, to collect the surface stones into heaps, or build them into walls, is of primary necessity for the improvement of the land. Conversely the stones were put back, and scattered over the land, by those who wished to "mar" it (2 Kings iii. 19, 25). **Planted it with the choicest vine** (comp. Gen. xlix. 11; Jer. ii. 21). The *sorêk* seems to have been a particular kind of vine, reckoned superior to others. The etymology of the word indicates that it was of a deep red colour. **Built a tower** (comp. Matt. xxi. 33). Towers had to be built in gardens, orchards, and vineyards, that watch might be kept from them against thieves and marauders (see 1 Kings xvii. 9; xviii. 8; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10; xxvii. 4, etc.). **Made a wine-press**; literally, *dug a wine-press*. The excavation was made to contain a vat, above which was the "press," worked by men, who wrung the liquor out of a great bag containing the grapes. (See the Egyptian rock-paintings, *passim*, where the operation is represented repeatedly.) **It brought forth wild grapes.** The natural, not the cultivated fruit, a worthless product.

Ver. 3.—The prophet's "song" here ends, and Jehovah himself takes the word. As if the story told in the parable had been a fact, he calls on the men of Judah and Jerusalem to "judge between him and his vineyard." Compare Nathan's appeal to David by the parable of the ewe lamb (2 Sam. xii. 1—4).

Ver. 4.—**What could have been done more?** Comp. 2 Kings xvii. 13 and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, where God is shown to have done all that was possible to reclaim his people: "Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to the Law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets;" "And the Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by his messengers, rising up early, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, *until there was no remedy.*"

Ver. 5.—**And now go to; I will tell you**; rather, *and now, I pray you, let me tell you.* The address is still smooth and persuasive up to the word "vineyard." Then there is a sudden change; the style becomes abrupt, the tone fierce and menacing. "Let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard: break down its hedge, that it be grazed on; destroy its wall, that it be trampled under-foot," etc. **The hedge . . . the wall.** Vineyards were usually protected either by a hedge of thorns, commonly of the prickly pear, or else by a wall; but the rabbis say that in some cases, for additional security, they were surrounded by both. God had given his vineyard all the protection possible.

Ver. 6.—**I will lay it waste**; literally, *I will make it a desolation* (comp. ch. vii. 19, where a cognate term occurs). Active ravage is not so much pointed at, as the desolation which comes from neglect. **There shall come up briers and thorns.** The natural produce of neglected ground in Palestine (see Prov. xxiv. 31). The "thorns and briers" symbolize vices of various kinds, the natural produce of the human soul, if God leaves it to itself. The words are scarcely to be taken literally, though it is probably true that "no country in the world has such variety and abundance of thorny plants as Palestine in its present desolation" (Macmillan, 'Min. of Nat.,' p. 103). **I will also command the clouds.** Here at last disguise is thrown off, and the speaker manifestly appears as Jehovah, who can alone "command the clouds." The "rain" intended is probably that of his gracious influences.

Ver. 7.—**For the vineyard**, etc. The full explanation of the parable follows imme-

diately on the disclosure in ver. 6. The vineyard is "Israel," or rather "Judah;" the fruit expected from it, "judgment and righteousness;" the wild grapes which alone it had produced, "oppression" and the "cry" of the distressed. **His pleasant plant**; literally, *the plant of his delights*; i.e. the plantation in which he had so long taken delight. **He looked for judgment**, etc. Gesenius has attempted to give the verbal antithesis of the Hebrew, which is quite lost in our version—

"Er harrete auf Recht, und siehe da Unrecht,
Auf Gerechtigkeit, und siehe da Schlechtigkeit."

Vers. 8—24.—THE SIX WOES. After the general warning conveyed to Israel by the parable of the vineyard, six sins are particularized as those which have especially provoked God to give the warning. On each of these woe is denounced. Two have special punishments assigned to them (vers. 8—17); the remainder are joined in one general threat of retribution (vers. 18—24).

Ver. 8.—**Woe unto them that join house to house.** This is *the first woe.* It is pronounced on the greed which leads men to continually enlarge their estates, without regard to their neighbours' convenience. Nothing is said of any use of unfair means, much less of violence in dispossessing the former proprietors. What is denounced is the selfishness of vast accumulations of land in single hands, to the detriment of the rest of the community. The Jewish law was peculiarly inimical to this practice (Numb. xxvii. 1—11; xxxiii. 54; 1 Kings xxi. 4); but perhaps it is not without reason that many writers of our own time object to it on general grounds. **Till there be no place**; literally, *till want of place*; i.e. till there is no room for others. A hyperbole, doubtless, but marking a real national inconvenience. **That they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth**; rather, *that ye may dwell by yourselves in the midst of the land.* The great landlords wished to isolate themselves; they disliked neighbours; they would fain "dwell by themselves," without neighbours to trouble them. Uzziah seems, by what is said of his possessions (2 Chron. xxvi. 10), to have been one of the greatest sinners in respect of the accumulation of land.

Ver. 9.—Either something has fallen out in the first clause of this verse, or there is a most unusual ellipse of the verb "said," which our translators have supplied, very properly. There seems to be nothing emphatic in the words, "**in mine ears**" (see ch. xxii. 14; Ezek. ix. 1, 5; x. 13). **Many houses shall be desolate.** The greed of adding house to house will be punished by the death of those who have so sinned, and the extinction of their families, either through war, or through a more direct divine judgment.

Ver. 10.—**Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath.** The greed of adding field to field will be punished by the curse of barrenness, which God will send upon the land. Dr. Kay calculates that ten acres (Roman) of vineyard ought to yield upon the average five hundred baths (or four thousand gallons) instead of one bath (eight gallons). **An homer . . . an ephah.** The "ephah" was the tenth-part of a "homer" (Ezek. xlv. 11). Corn lands should return only one-tenth part of the seed sown in them.

Ver. 11.—**Woe unto them that . . . follow strong drink.** We have here *the second woe.* It is pronounced on drunkenness and revelry. Drunkenness is an infrequent Oriental vice; but it seems to have been one whereto many among the Jews were at all times prone (see Prov. xx. 1; xxiii. 29—32; Eccles. x. 17; Hos. iv. 11; ch. xxviii. 7, etc.). Even the priests and the *soi-disant* prophets "erred through strong drink and were swallowed up of wine" (ch. xxviii. 7). **That rise up early in the morning.** Great banquets were held by the "princes" and "nobles," beginning at an early hour (Eccles. x. 16), and accompanied by music of an exciting kind (Amos vi. 5, 6), which were "continued until night," or rather, "*into* the night" (Revised Version), and terminated in general drunkenness, perhaps in general licentiousness. (See Prov. xxiii. 27—30 and Hos. iv. 11 for the connection of inebriety with whoredom.) Two kinds of intoxicating liquor seem to have been consumed at these banquets, viz. ordinary grape wine, and a much stronger drink, which is said to have been "made of dates, pomegranates, apples, honey, barley, and other ingredients," which was known as *shékár* (Greek, σίκερα), and is called "strong drink" in the Authorized Version. **Till wine inflame them**; or, *the wine inflaming them.*

Ver. 12.—**The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe.** It is difficult to identify the Hebrew instruments of music with modern names; but there seems to be no doubt that the *kinnôr* was a sort of harp, and the *khâlîb* a sort of pipe. The *nebel*, generally rendered by "psaltery," but here and in ch. xiv. 11 by "viol," was a stringed instrument played with the fingers (Josephus); perhaps a lyre, perhaps a sort of dulcimer. The *tôph*, here translated "tabret," and elsewhere often "timbrel,"

was most likely a tambourine. All four instruments had in the earlier times been dedicated to the worship of Jehovah (1 Sam. x. 5); now they were employed to inflame men's passions at feasts. **They regard not the work of the Lord.** The "work of Jehovah" is his manifestation of himself in history, more especially in the history of his chosen people (Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xcii. 4; cxi. 3, etc.). A pious Israelite was ever marvelling at all that God had done for his nation (Deut. xxxii. 7—14; Josh. xxiv. 2—13; 1 Chron. xvi. 12—22; Ezra ix. 7—9; Neh. ix. 7—31; Ps. lxviii. 7—28; lxxviii. 10—72; cv. 5—45; cvi. 7—46; cxxxvi. 5—24, etc.). The men of Isaiah's generation had ceased to care for things of the past, and devoted themselves to enjoying the present. **Neither consider**, etc. (comp. ch. i. 3, "My people doth not consider"). The verb used is not, however, the same in the Hebrew.

Ver. 13.—**Therefore my people are gone into captivity.** "Are gone" or "have gone" is "the perfect of prophetic certainty" (Cheyne). The prophet sees the captivity as a thing that had already taken place. It was an appropriate punishment for drunkenness and revelry to be carried off into servitude, and in that condition to suffer, as slaves so often did, hunger and thirst. **Because** they have **no knowledge**; or, *unawares, without foreseeing it* (so Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Ewald, Delitzsch, Cheyne). **Their honourable men**; literally, *their glory*, for "their glorious ones"—the abstract for the concrete. **Are famished**; literally, *sons of famine*; i.e. "starvelings." **Their multitude**; or, *their noisy crowd* (Kay)—the "throng of voluptuaries" who frequented the great banquets of vers. 11, 12.

Ver. 14.—**Therefore hell hath enlarged herself**; rather, *hath enlarged her desire* (comp. Hab. ii. 5). "Hell" here represents the underworld, into which souls descended at death, not yet perhaps recognized as comprehending two divisions, but regarded much as the Greeks regarded their Hades—as a general receptacle of the dead, dark and silent. Hades (*Sheôl*), not viewed as a person, but personified by poetical licence, "enlarges her desire" and "opens her mouth" to receive the crowd that is approaching—the crowd of those who in captivity succumb to the hardships of their lot. **Their glory**; literally, *her glory*—the glory, *i.e.*, of Jerusalem, which is especially in the prophet's thoughts. "*Her* glory, and *her* crowd, and *her* pomp, and he that is joyful *in her*, shall go down" into the *sheôl* that gapes for them.

Ver. 15.—**And the mean man shall be brought down**; rather, *so the mean man is brought down*; i.e. in this way, by the Captivity and the consequent sufferings and deaths, both high and low are brought down and humbled, while God is exalted in man's sight. The future is throughout spoken of as present (comp. ch. ii. 9, 11, 17).

Ver. 16.—**God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness**; rather, *the holy God shows himself holy by righteousness*; i.e. by executing this righteous judgment on Jerusalem the holy God shows his holiness.

Ver. 17.—**Then shall the lambs feed.** Dr. Kay takes the "lambs" to be the remnant of Israel that survived the judgment, who will feed freely, cared for by the good Shepherd; but the parallelism so generally affected by Isaiah seems to require a meaning more consonant with the later clause of the verse. Most commentators, therefore, expound the passage literally, "Then shall lambs feed [on the desolated estates of the covetous]" (see vers. 8—10). **After their manner**; or, *after their own guidance*; i.e. at their pleasure, as they list (so Lowth and Rosenmüller). **And the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.** *Goim*, i.e. nomad tribes, shall consume the produce of the wasted fields once possessed by the Hebrew grandees. Ewald proposes to make the verse immediately follow ver. 10; but this is not necessary. The occupation of their lands by wandering tribes, Arabs and others, was a part of the punishment that fell on all the nobles, not on those only who accumulated large estates.

Ver. 18.—**Woe unto them**, etc. We come here to *the third woe*, which is pronounced against those who openly pile up sin upon sin, and scoff at God. These men are represented as "drawing iniquity with cords of vanity," *i.e.* dragging after them a load of sin by cords that seem too weak; and then as "sinning with a cart-rope," which is a mere variant expression of the same idea. Mr. Cheyne quotes from the Rig-Veda, as a parallel metaphor, the phrase, "Undo the rope of sin."

Ver. 19.—**That say, Let him make speed**, etc. Instead of trembling at the coming judgment of God, which Isaiah has announced, they pretend to desire its immediate arrival; they want to "see it." They walk, not by faith, but by sight. At the bottom of this pretended desire there lies a complete incredulity. **The counsel**; or, *purpose*, as in ch. xiv. 26. **Of the Holy One of Israel.** They use one of Isaiah's favourite titles of God (see note on ch. i. 4), not from any belief in him, but rather in a mocking spirit.

Ver. 20.—**Woe unto them that call evil good.** This is *the fourth woe*. There are persons who gloss over evil deeds and evil habits by fair-sounding names, who call cowardice caution, and rashness courage,

niggardliness thrift, and wasteful profusion generosity. The same men are apt also to call good evil; they brand prudence with the name of cunning, call meekness want of proper spirit, sincerity rudeness, and firmness obstinacy. This deadness to moral distinctions is the sign of deep moral corruption, and fully deserves to have a special "woe" pronounced against it. **That put darkness for light.** "Light" and "darkness" symbolize good and evil throughout Scripture (1 Sam. ii. 9; 2 Sam. xxii. 29; Job xxix. 3; Ps. cxii. 4; Prov. ii. 13; Eccles. ii. 13; ch. ix. 2; Matt. vi. 22; John i. 19; Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. xiii. 12; 1 Cor. iv. 5, etc.). They are sometimes mere synonyms, as here; but sometimes they express rather the intellectual side of morality. **Bitter for sweet.** More symbolism, but of a rarer kind. Jeremiah calls wickedness "bitter" (ii. 19; iv. 18), and the psalmist calls the judgments of God "sweet" (Ps. cix. 103). But the terms are not often used with any moral bearing.

Ver. 21.—**Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes.** *The fifth woe.* Self-conceit is the antithesis of humility; and as humility is, in a certain sense, the crowning virtue, so self-conceit is a sort of finishing touch put to vice. While a man thinks humbly of himself, there is a chance that he may repent and amend. When he is "wise in his own eyes," he does not see why he should change.

Ver. 22.—**Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine.** *The sixth woe* seems at first sight a repetition of the second. But there is this difference, that the drinkers in the present verse do not succumb to their liquor, or remain at the banquet all day, but proceed to the business of their lives, attend courts and judge causes, but with brain obfuscated and moral vision bedimmed, so that they are easily induced to pervert justice on receipt of a bribe. The sixth woe may be considered to be pronounced rather upon their corruption than upon their drinking, and so to be really quite distinct from the second (comp. Prov. xxxi. 4, 5).

Ver. 23.—**Justify the wicked;** *i.e.* "decide his cause in his favour," declare him to be right and his adversary wrong. **For reward;** or, *for a bribe.* **Take away the righteousness of the righteous;** *i.e.* "declare him to be in the wrong by deciding his cause against him."

Ver. 24.—**Therefore,** etc. A general judgment is now pronounced against all the forms of wickedness enumerated—a judgment of ruin or destruction. It is expressed by a mixed metaphor, or "combination of two figures," the former taken from the burning of stubble and withered grass by the farmer when he is cleaning his fields, the latter from the natural decay of a blossoming plant or tree. In either case the destruction is complete, but in the one it arises from an external force, fire; in the other from an internal failure of vitality. The ruin of Israel would include both; it would be brought about by an internal cause, their corruption, and an external one, God's anger. **As the fire devoureth the stubble;** literally, *as a tongue of fire eats up stubble.* "Tongue of fire" is an unusual phrase, occurring in all Scripture only here and in Acts ii. 3. But it well depicts the power of fire to lick up clean all that comes in its way. Isaiah elsewhere notes the analogy, making it the foundation of a simile (ch. xxx. 27). **And the flame consumeth the chaff;** rather, *and as dry grass sinks down in flame.* The withered grass of pastures was burnt by farmers to improve the after-growth (Lucan, 'Pharsal.,' ix. 182). **Their root shall be as rottenness** (comp. Hos. ix. 16). The root is the last thing to decay. When that fails, the case is desperate. Judah's "root" did not utterly fail (see ch. xi. 1); but the present warning is to individuals and classes (vers. 8, 11, 18, 20—23), not to the nation. **Their blossom shall go up as dust;** *i.e.* their external glory shall crumble and waste away. **Because they have cast away the Law.** All the sins of Israel had this one thing in common—they were transgressions of the Law of God as delivered to them by Moses, and enforced upon them by the prophetical order (comp. 2 Kings xvii. 13—16). **Despised the word;** or, *the speech.* *Imrah* is rarely used by Isaiah. It does not refer to the written "Word," but to the declarations of God by the mouth of his prophets (see ch. xxviii. 23; xxxii. 9).

Vers. 25—30.—THE NATURE OF THE COMING JUDGMENT EXPLAINED. Hints have been already given that the judgment which is to fall on the nation is a foreign war, or a series of foreign wars (see ch. iii. 25; v. 13). But now for the first time a terrible invasion, in which many nations will participate, is clearly announced. At first the imagery is obscure (ver. 25), but it soon grows more distinct. "Nations" are summoned to the attack; a vast army comes, and comes "with speed swiftly" (ver. 26); then their array is described (vers. 27, 28); and finally their ravin is compared to that of lions, and their success in catching and carrying off their prey is prophesied (ver. 29). In the last verse of the chapter the prophet falls back into vaguer imagery, comparing the roar of the invaders to the roaring of the sea, and

the desolated land to one seen under the gloom of a preternatural darkness (ver. 30).

Ver. 25.—The threats of this verse are all vague and general, for there is no reason to suppose that the phrase, "the hills did tremble," refers to an actual earthquake. That there was an earthquake in the reign of Uzziah is, indeed, clear from Amos i. 1; but it was probably a thing of the past when Isaiah wrote this chapter, and he is speaking of the future. A "trembling of the hills" is, in prophetic language, a commotion among the chief men of the land. **He hath stretched forth his hand.** Again the "perfect of prophetic certitude." **Their carcases were torn**; rather, *were as refuse* (comp. Lam. iii. 45). There would be many slain, and lying unburied, in the streets of Jerusalem. **For all this**, etc. (comp. ch. ix. 12, 17, 21, and x. 4, where the same words are used as a refrain). The words imply that God's judgment upon Judah will not be a single stroke, but a continuous smiting, covering some considerable space of time.

Ver. 26.—**And he will lift up an ensign.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "a signal," and would so render the Hebrew word in ch. xi. 10, 12; xiii. 2; xviii. 3; xlix. 22; lxii. 10. But "ensigns" or "standards" were in use both among the Egyptians (Rosellini, 'Monumenti Civili,' pl. cxxi.) and among the Assyrians ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 461) before the time of Isaiah, and are, therefore, likely to have been in use among the Hebrews. The standards, however, of this early period were not flags, as Jarchi supposes, but solid constructions of wood or metal, exhibiting some emblem or other. God lifts up his standard to draw the nations together, indicating thereby that they are to fight his battles. **And will hiss.** "Hissing" is said to have been practised by bee-keepers to draw their bees out of the hives in the morning, and bring them home again from the fields at nightfall (Cyril, *ad loc.*). God will collect an army against Israel, as such persons collect their bees (comp. ch. vii. 18). **From the end of the earth**; *i.e.* "*to bring them* from the end of the earth." The nations are, or at least many of them are, extremely distant, as Elamites from the Persian Gulf (ch. xxii. 6), and perhaps Medes from beyond Zagros. **They shall come**; literally, *he cometh*; showing that, though the nations are many, they are united under one head, which here is probably the Assyrian power. **With speed swiftly** (comp. Joel iii. 4). The reference is not so much to the speed with which the Assyrians marched, as to the immediate response which they would make to God's call.

Ver. 27.—**None shall be weary nor stumble.** None shall lag behind on the march, none fall and be disabled. **None shall slumber.** They shall scarcely give themselves time for necessary repose.

Ver. 28.—**Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent.** The special weapon of the Assyrian soldiers is the bow. From the king in his chariot to the light-armed recruit just pressed into the service, all fight mainly with this weapon, more particularly in the earlier times (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. pp. 414, 421, 424—437, etc.). Swords and spears are also known, but comparatively little used. **Their horses' hoofs . . . like flint.** Hard, strong, and solid, as was most necessary when shoeing was unknown. **Their wheels like a whirlwind.** Sennacherib (ch. xxxvii. 24) is represented as boasting of the "multitude of his chariots;" and both the sculptures and the inscriptions of Assyria show that the chariot force was numerous, and was regarded as more important than any other. The king always went to battle in a chariot. For the comparison of the rush of chariot-wheels to a whirlwind, see below, ch. lxvi. 15; and comp. Jer. iv. 13).

Ver. 29.—**Their roaring shall be like a lion**; rather, *like a lioness*, which the Hebrews appear to have regarded as fiercer than a lion (see Gen. xliv. 9; Numb. xxiv. 9; Nah. ii. 11). The Assyrian armies probably advanced to the combat with loud shouts and yells (see Jer. ii. 15). **Yea, they shall roar**; rather, *growl*. The word is different from the one used previously, and may express the "deep growl" with which the lion springs upon his prey (see Dr. Kay's note, *ad loc.*). **Shall carry it away safe.** Sennacherib says in one of his inscriptions, that he carried off to Nineveh 200,150 captives on his first expedition against Jerusalem (Oppert, 'Inscriptions des Sargonides,' pp. 45, 46).

Ver. 30.—**Like the roaring of the sea.** Not content with one simile, the prophet has recourse to a second. "The noise of the Assyrian army shall be like that of a a raging sea;" or, perhaps, "After he has carried off his prey, the Assyrian shall still continue to growl and threaten, like a stormy sea." **If one look unto the land**, etc. If Israel turn its gaze from Assyria to its own land, it sees nothing but a dark prospect—darkness and distress, all light shrouded amid clouds and deep obscurity. The text and the construction are, both of them, uncertain; but the general meaning can scarcely be other than this.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*God's care for man, and man's ingratitude.* Three times has God made himself a vineyard upon earth, planted a plantation of choice vines, endued by him with the capacity of bringing forth excellent fruit, fenced his vineyard round with care, cleared its soil of stones, pruned its superfluous shoots, hoed out the weeds from between the vine-stocks, bestowed on it all possible tendance, and looked to see a suitable result; and three times has the result, for which he had every right to look, *not* followed.

I. THE FIRST VINEYARD—THE WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD. Man was placed in a world which God saw to be "very good" (Gen. i. 31); he was endued with excellent powers; he was given dominion over the beasts; he was bidden to "increase and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. i. 28); he was guarded from a thousand dangers; he was fenced round by the Almighty arms; God's Spirit "strove with him" (Gen. vi. 3), chastened him, warned him, spoke through his conscience, and showed him the right path to walk in. What more could he have done to his first vineyard, that he did not do to it? Yet the time came when he "looked upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12); looked for the fruits of what he had done; looked for "judgment and righteousness." And what did he find when he looked? "The wickedness of man was great in the earth; every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. vi. 5). "The earth was corrupt before God;" "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" "the earth was full of violence" (Gen. vi. 11, 12). The vineyard that should have brought forth grapes had brought forth wild grapes. God's care for man had been met by man with ingratitude towards God; and it only remained that God should take vengeance, and lay his vineyard waste, and so vindicate his justice.

II. THE SECOND VINEYARD—THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. This is the vineyard whereof Isaiah especially speaks. God planted his second vineyard, Israel, on the "very fruitful" upland of Palestine—"a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards, of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings xviii. 32); "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein they might eat bread without scarceness, and needed not to lack anything; a land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass" (Deut. viii. 7—9). He fenced his vineyard round with laws and ordinances morally, as with mountains and deserts topographically; he cleared out from it the stones that marred its soil, the wicked nations—"stones of offence"—that once dwelt amid his people; he planted it with choice vine-stocks, the children of "faithful Abraham;" he built a tower—Jerusalem—in the midst of it, and made therein a wine-press—the temple—where he would have the gifts and offerings of the people, their good works, laid up in store; and he then "looked that his vineyard should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." Oppression, wrong, robbery, murder, the form of religion without the power, covetousness, drunkenness, vanity, impurity,—these were what his eyes beheld when he cast them on his chosen people, who were "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that were corrupters" (ch. i. 4). Greater benefits than those bestowed on the first vineyard had been met by a deeper ingratitude; and now the time was coming when the second vineyard would be laid waste, withered up, and utterly "ruined" (ch. iii. 8).

III. THE THIRD VINEYARD—THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. God has yet planted a third vineyard, which he calls "his Church" (Matt. xvi. 18), the assembly of his "selected ones." He has not fixed it in any particular land, but has given it the whole fruitful earth for its habitation. Yet has he fenced it round, and separated it off from the rest of mankind by laws and rites and ordinances, which are peculiar, and made it a world within a world, a society within a society. He has gathered out from it the stones of many heresies; he has planted it with choice vines, the "chosen vessels" whom his grace has from time to time converted from unbelief to the true faith; he has given it for its "tower" of strength himself, and for its "wine-press" the book of life, in which he records its good deeds. And now, what is the result? Has his constant, tender care

awakened the gratitude which it ought to have awakened? Has his Church brought forth such fruit as might have been anticipated? Is it not to be feared that even now his eye, resting on his third vineyard with its searching gaze, looks for something which it does not find—demands "grapes," and sees little but "wild grapes"?

Vers. 8—17.—*The appropriateness of God's punishments.* Many of the punishments of sin follow in the way of natural consequence, and these are generally acknowledged to be fitting and appropriate; *e.g.*—

I. IDLENESS IS PUNISHED BY WANT. "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10). Labour naturally produces wealth, or at any rate value of some kind; and those who work the hardest naturally acquire the most. The idle cannot complain if they have few of this world's goods, since they have made no efforts to obtain them. They are fitly punished for their waste of time in sloth by the want of those good things which they might have procured by diligence in toil. The wise man will not give indiscriminate relief to the poor and needy. There is much poverty which is the simple natural result and suitable punishment of idle "loafing" habits.

II. DRUNKENNESS IS PUNISHED BY LOSS OF MENTAL POWER, AND IN SOME CASES BY A TERRIBLE MALADY. The drunkard voluntarily confuses his mental faculties, and suspends their healthy operation, each time that he indulges in the sin whereto he is addicted. What can be more appropriate than that he should be punished by a permanent diminution of his intellectual vigour, a loss of nerve, promptitude, and decision? He also deranges his bodily functions by causing an undue flow of blood to the brain, and an undue excitement of the nerves whose connection is so close with the cerebral tissues. It is most natural and most fitting that such ill treatment of these delicate tissues should result in permanent injury to them, and cause the dreadful malady known to medical science as *delirium tremens*. The drunkard "receives within himself" a most appropriate "recompense of his error" (Rom. i. 27).

III. LUST IS PUNISHED BY A LOATHSOME DISEASE. The nature of the subject here is such as to preclude much illustration. But what can be more appropriate than the punishment of the most foul and filthy of sins by a disease which is foul and filthy and loathsome, alike to others and to the object of it? The body marred and scarred, the blood infected, the whole constitution undermined, form not only a just, but a most fitting, punishment of one, the peculiarity of whose sin is that he "sins against his own body" (1 Cor. vi. 18).

In the case of Israel special national sins were punished by special judgments, also peculiarly appropriate; *e.g.*—

I. THE GREED WHICH JOINED HOUSE TO HOUSE AND FIELD TO FIELD was punished by an invasion which caused the destruction and ruin of the annexed houses (ver. 9), and the desolation of the annexed estates. The ruin of the vineyards was such that it was scarcely worth while to gather the produce, the continued devastation of the corn lands such that the harvest did not nearly equal the seed corn. Nomad tribes pastured their flocks on the over-large estates, and the so-called owners derived little or no benefit from their acquisitions (vers. 10, 17).

II. DRUNKEN REVELRY was punished by the captivity of the revellers, who were carried off as slaves into a strange land, and there experienced the usual fate of slaves, which included bitter experience of hunger and thirst (ver. 13). The dole allowed the slave was seldom more than sufficient to keep body and soul together. His drink was water. Kept to hard labour on imperial palaces and other "great works," he lost all cheerfulness, all lightness of heart, all love of song or music. Asked by his task-masters to "sing them one of the songs of Zion," he declined sadly; the harp of his revels was "hung upon the willows" of Babylon (Ps. cxxxvii. 2—4).

God's judgments upon other nations have often had the same character of appropriateness. Egypt, whose great sin had been pride (Ezek. xxix. 4), was condemned to be "the basest of the kingdoms" (ver. 15); never destroyed, but always subject to one people or another—Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks. Rome, the most cruel and bloody of conquering states, was made a prey, first to bloody tyrants of her own race, and then to a succession of fierce and savage northern hordes—Goths, Huns, Vandals, Burgundians, Heruli, Lombards—who spared neither age nor sex, and delighted in carnage and massacre. Macedonia, raised to greatness by her military

system, and using it unsparingly to crush all her rivals, is ruined by being brought into contact with a military system superior to her own. Spain, elevated to the first position in Europe by her colonial greatness, is corrupted by her colonial wealth, and sinks faster than she had risen. States formed by conquest usually perish by conquest; governments founded on revolution are, for the most part, destroyed by revolution. The retributive justice which shows itself in the world's history does not consist in the mere fact that sin is punished, but rather in the remarkable adaptation of the punishment which is dealt out to the sin that has provoked it.

Vers. 25—29.—*Wicked men used by God as instruments for working out his purposes.* The psalmist declares the wicked to be "God's sword" (Ps. xvii. 13). In a later chapter Isaiah calls Assyria "the rod of God's anger" (ch. x. 5). Nothing is more clearly set forth in the prophetical writings than the fact that—

I. CONQUERING NATIONS ARE RAISED UP BY GOD TO CHASTISE THE NATIONS THAT ARE HIS ENEMIES. 1. Assyria was "the axe" with which God hewed down offending peoples (ch. x. 14), "the rod" wherewith he smote them. God exalted her, in order that she might "lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps" (ch. xxxvii. 26). This was her *raison d'être*, the purpose of her existence (ch. xxxvii. 26). She was *sent* against one openly wicked or "hypocritical nation" after another, and *given a charge* "to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire in the streets" (ch. x. 6). 2. Babylon was raised up for the castigation of Tyre (Ezek. xxvi. 7), of Egypt (Ezek. xxix. 19, 20; xxx. 10—26), and of Judah (Jer. xxv. 9). 3. Media and Persia were raised up to work the will of God upon Assyria and Babylon (Isa. xiii. 17; xxi. 2; Jer. li. 11, etc.). 4. Greece and Macedon were raised up to punish Persia and Media (Dan. viii. 5—8); and so on. Each of these nations was ungodly—full of impurity, pride, selfishness, greed, cruelty. Yet God made use of them for his purposes, and does not scruple to call their rulers "his servants," "his shepherds," "those who performed all his pleasure" (ch. xliv. 28; Jer. xxv. 11; xxvii. 6, etc.).

II. BAD MEN ARE EXALTED TO POWER TO CHASTISE BOTH NATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS. Samson, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar seem to have been rather instruments for punishing nations and states. But such men as Joab, Jehu, Hazael, effected God's purposes mainly with respect to individuals. God made use of them, and of their sinful tempers, to execute vengeance upon certain special offenders. Jehu was anointed king by God's prophet to punish Jezebel and the house of Ahab (2 Kings ix. 2—26; x. 1—11). Fired by ambition, he rushed into crime, and "the blood of Jezreel" was afterwards avenged upon his house (Hos. i. 4). But for Joab the crimes of Abner and of Absalom would probably have gone unpunished. He may be viewed as God's instrument to requite their ill deeds; but as he punished the one treacherously and the other against his king's commands, their blood, or at any rate that of Abner, "returned upon the head of Joab" (1 Kings ii. 33). Hazael's case is like that of Jehu, only not set before us with such distinctness. He was "God's sword" to the wicked Benhadad; but not thereby excused. God turns the wickedness of men into particular channels, making it effect his ends; but it is wickedness none the less.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The parable of the vineyard.* I. NOTICE THE ART OF THE PARABLE. It has been remarked, "A proverb finds him who a sermon flies." Pictures from nature are acceptable to all, especially of that nature which is familiar to the imagination of the listener. Through the imagination we may glide into our listener's heart and conscience. The truth comes with much more power when it is made to glance from an object intermediate between the mind and its naked reality. A great secret of teaching is to leave the learner much of the work to do. Here, as he looks upon the bright picture drawn by the prophet, the wrappings of the parable gradually fall aside, and the truth itself stands out.

II. THE PICTURE OF THE VINEYARD. The close touch of accuracy suits the parable. Then follows a short song. 1. *Situation of the vineyard.* It lay on "the horn of Ben-Shamen," *i.e.* son of fatness; on a fertile height. The Roman poet sung that the vine

loves the open sunny hills (Virgil, 'Georg.,' ii. 113). The description is of fruitful Canaan, flowing with milk, honey, and wine. We may think of the beautiful slopes of the Rhine. 2. *The care expended on the vineyard.* It had been fenced, the stones had been cleared from it, and it had been planted with the choicest vines. Some take the word rendered "fenced" in the sense of digged about, thoroughly digged. The watch-tower had also been set up in the midst of the field, a post of observation and of guard against the jackals and the foxes in the ripening time. 3. *The thankless soil.* The vine-dresser's hope is deceived; for, instead of the true grapes wild ones only appear, or, as the LXX. render *akanthas*, thorns. Gesenius and others think the plant meant is the monk's-hood or nightshade, which produces berries like the grapes in appearance, but poisonous. If we compare the story in 2 Kings iv. 39—41, also Deut. xxxii. 32, 33 ("vine of Sodom, grapes of gall, bitter clusters"), this will seem probable. The Arabs call them wolf-grapes. The idea is caught by one of our poets when he sings of

> "Dead Sea fruits that tempt the taste,
> And turn to ashes on the lips."

III. APPLICATION. 1. *Jehovah's appeal.* It is an appeal to memory and to conscience. What more could God have done? Israel had been selected for special service and fruitfulness—had been fixed in a fertile land, her life and worship centred in the holy city. What was that city now? A scene of order, morality, good government? Alas! a "den of thieves," a scene of misery and anarchy. Instead of the genuine grapes of a national life strong and pure, the poisonous berries of luxury and vice. Such must be the result where man grafts his own pride or folly upon the stock of conscience. 2. *Jehovah's denunciation.* The thick thorn fence shall be removed, and the vineyard shall become a prey to every trampling beast and invader. The hand of the pruner and the digger shall be stayed, the clouds shall suspend their gift of rain. Every protection and every blessing shall be withdrawn, and the thankless nation shall earn its appropriate wages. Having deserted God, God will now desert her. So must it ever be with the nation and the individual. Unless there is a constant disposition to redress discovered wrong, to reform manifest evil, the doom must be felt. "Thy vineyard shall be wasted, thy candlestick taken from its place" (Rev. ii. 5). 3. *The reason of the judgment.* In poignant language, by the use of *paronomasia*, or play on words, the prophet announces the ground of the Divine decision. He waited for *Mishpâth*, i.e. *Right*, and behold *Mispâth*, i.e. *Might*; for *Zedâkah*, i.e. *Exactness*, and lo *Zeâyach*, i.e. *Exaction*! A bitter intensity suggests this form of speech.

IV. PERSONAL APPLICATION. In our sinful miseries God is calling us to account. Our life-failure, whose fault is it? Does not Nature pour her beauty around us, instruct us from childhood, fill our sense and fancy with wonder and joy? Does not the world of men afford us a daily school of experience? Is not every suffering a pruning-knife, every change of life like a cleaning of the ground from weeds and stones? If our lives turn out selfish and vicious, where does the responsibility lie? Where, except in the secret fault that may poison all God's good?

> "Lord, with what care hast thou begirt us round!
> Parents first season us. Then schoolmasters
> Deliver us to laws. They send us bound
> To rules of reason. Holy messengers;
> Pulpits and Sundays; sorrow dogging sin;
> Afflictions sorted; anguish of all sizes;
> Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in!
> Bibles laid open; millions of surprises;
> Blessings beforehand; ties of gratefulness;
> The sounds of glory ringing in our ears;
> Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
> Angels and grace; eternal hopes and fears!
> Yet all these fences, and their whole array,
> One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away."

J.

Vers. 8—10.—*Woe to the covetous.* To understand this passage we should bear in mind the truths connected with real property as a condition of national well-being.

I. THE INSTITUTION OF LANDED PROPERTY IN ISRAEL. According to the Law, each of the twelve tribes was to have its landed possessions, and each particular household was to have its definite portion of the land belonging to the tribe; and this was to be an inalienable heritage. Among an agricultural people it is most necessary that each family should thus have a fixed foothold on the land, a home, a centre of toil and acquisition; and that thus its members should be firmly bound to their native land and to their fellow-countrymen. In a conquered land, again, it was equitable that the fields should be divided among those who took part in the burdens of war, and who desired to cultivate the conquered land in peace. In many passages of the Law we find the impress of this institution of real property. In the year of jubilee every man was to be restored to his patrimony (Lev. xxv. 13). The land was never to be sold, because in fact it belonged to Jehovah (ver. 23), and the people were but his stewards. In the interesting case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numb. xxvii. 1—11), who had died in the desert, we find it laid down that the children, or nearest relatives of one who had died without coming into his portion, were to possess it in his stead. Again, the men of Reuben and of Gad refused to go to war until every man of them had received his inheritance (Numb. xxxii. 16, *sqq.*). And Moses agreed to their conditions. In the same book we read the direction, "Ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance" (Numb. xxxiii. 54). The land, it will be seen, was considered as in tenure from Jehovah himself, the only landlord. And how attached an Israelite would become to his ancestral estate, is seen from the story of Naboth, who will not give up his even for a better one, and at the king's request (1 Kings xxi. 3, *sqq.*; 2 Kings ix. 10, 25, *sqq.*). The virtues of patriotism struck deep root in this relation to the soil of Palestine. These facts help us to understand the moral and national evils springing from selfish greed, which threatened this institution of property, of which the prophet here complains.

II. THE VICE OF COVETOUSNESS. The root of the vice is a thorough-going selfishness. The rich men use the means at their command unjustly to absorb the land into their own possession. The result must be the hopeless misery and degradation of the mass of the people. An instructive parallel to the state of things described by the prophet is to be found in the history of Sparta, at the time of the great lawgiver, Lycurgus. Plutarch tells us that the disorders which he found existing in the state arose in great measure from the gross inequality of property, and from the long avarice and rapacity of the rich, who had thus added house to house and field to field. The lawgiver, therefore, redistributed the whole territory of Sparta. In Roman letters we read allusions to the habit of forming *latifundia*, or "broad farms," with its unsocial consequences. "How far," indignantly exclaims Seneca, "will ye extend the bounds of your possessions; not content to circumscribe the area of your estates by the sowing of provinces? The broad acres own one lord; the people crowd into a narrow field. The courses of bright streams flow through private estates; great rivers, bounds of great nations, from the source to the mouth, all are yours. And this is nothing unless you have girdled your broad farms with seas; unless across the Hadriatic, the Ionian, and the Ægean your bailiff reigns; unless islands, domiciles of great dukes, are reckoned amongst the commonest of things. Shall there be no lake over which the roofs of your villas hang not? no stream whose banks are not covered by your buildings?" (Ep. lxxxviii.). In his beautiful 'Deserted Village,' Goldsmith says—

> "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Too well we know what inappeasable discontent and seeming incurable misery has been begotten in Ireland of past selfishness and injustice of the few. Surely it is the part of every patriotic Christian man to forward all legislation which throws open God's land to tillage, and breaks up selfish monopolies.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF COVETOUSNESS. 1. *Its folly is exposed.* One would think, from their conduct, that these grasping men desired to dwell alone amidst a waste! But, as the old agricultural poet of Greece says, "The man who frames ills against another frames them against himself, and ill counsel turns out worst for him who

devised it. The all-seeing eye of Zeus looks upon these things, and they escape him not" (Hesiod, 'Works and Days,' 265, 266). Judgment gets the better of injustice when it comes to the final issue, and the fool who suffers from his avarice knows it to his cost. Like a wronged woman, she passes through the city, bewailing the manners of the people, clothed in mist; for men see not her approach, and know not that she is the cause of their calamities, who have driven her forth by her unjust deeds. Those, continues the poet, who do right by the strangers and the natives of the land—their city flourishes, the people blossom therein; and peace, the nourisher of youths, prevails through the land. To them far-seeing Zeus appoints no bitter war; famine and curse are unknown. The earth produces abundance, the trees drop fruit and honey, the fleeces are heavy on the sheep; and mothers bear a noble offspring. But often a whole city suffers from an evil man, who is a sinner and devises haughty plans. Pestilence and famine come from the hands of the Supreme upon men; the houses are thinned and the people perish (ibid., vv. 217, etc.). These are close analogies to the great thoughts of our prophet. 2. *The appropriate punishment.* Those who have grasped at more than their right will find the coveted good dwindling in their hands, or, like a Dead Sea fruit, turning to ashes on their lips. One bucket only will be obtained from the "yoke" of vineyard; one bushel of corn from a quarter's seed. Thus may we find in nature a profound Scripture, a record and a testimony of Divine law not to be gainsaid. In this day of science perhaps we fix our thought too exclusively on the dependence of man on Nature. There is another side of truth equally important—the dependence of Nature on man. In moral energy, in compliance with the laws of right, we become more and more the masters of Nature, and she smiles back upon us with an aspect of recognition and blessing. In the sloth of our spirit and its corruption from truth we can no longer win the sympathy of the earth; and her groaning aspect reflects and represents a guilty decline of the soul. These truths are general; only experience can teach where and how they must be modified in their application.—J.

Vers. 11—16.—*Mirth and mourning.* I. THOUGHTLESS PLEASURE-SEEKING. A scene of habitual dissipation is depicted by the prophet. 1. *Wine and music* are used, not legitimately, to relax the tension of the overwrought mind, but to dispel thought altogether. Sensuous pleasure is made an end and object, though it can never be healthy except in succession to work. "They rise early in the morning to follow the wassail; late into the night are heated by wine." "Guitar, and harp, and tambourine, and flute, and wine is their revel." How wise were the teachings of Plato on the use of music as a means of influence over the mind! He would not permit the employment of "effeminate and convivial" airs in his ideal state, the lax Ionian and Lydian. He would have only two kinds of tunes; those which represented the tones and accents of the brave man engaged in action, and those which chimed with the devotional and peaceful mood; in short, the tones which reflect the temper of brave men in prosperity and adversity. Makers of harps and dulcimers, and other more elaborate instruments, were not to be maintained in the city ('Rep.,' p. 399). These hints are perhaps too little attended to in our day. Yet there is modern music, *e.g.* that of the Italian opera in general, which tends to enervate the soul. Rather should we choose to listen to the strains of the great German masters, Beethoven, Handel, Mendelssohn. These men inspire us with lofty moods and religious thoughts. Avoid mean and brainless music, whether so-called secular or sacred. 2. *Blindness to the thought and work of God.* The most glorious privilege we can enjoy is that of intellectual vision of Divine work in nature and in mankind, the loftiest pleasure that of intellectual sympathy with the Divine mind. But the sensuous pleasure excludes the spiritual. Do men consider what they lose by dimming their perceptions and confusing their intelligence in these lower indulgences? Not on wine and soft music is that "vision and faculty Divine" nourished, by which the prophet and the worshipper enter into the scene of holiest enjoyments, of enrapturing revelations. The operation of the Eternal in the soul and the world goes on silently and secretly, and we need the "purged ear" that we may listen to his voice, the unclouded eye that we may note events which flow from his causation.

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF FRIVOLITY. 1. Captivity comes suddenly upon these revellers, and they wander forth "unawares," like those who rub their blear eyes after

a night's debauch. They cannot understand what has happened to them. They talk of "strange misfortunes," of inexplicable calamities. But they have an explanation. The decay of a family, or of a class, or of a nation, is as much the result of Divine law as any other form of decay. In exile and suffering men pay the long-due debt for their voluptuous indulgences. The "nobility is spent with hunger, its revel-rout dried up with thirst." The music has to stop. The voice of Jehovah may be heard saying, "Take thou away from me the voice of thy songs; for I will not listen to the melody of thy viols" (Amos v. 23). Those that have put far from them the evil day, lying on ivory couches, luxuriously feasting, singing to the viol, drinking from the flowing bowl, anointed and perfumed, reckless of human suffering around them, shall pass into exile, and darkness and desolation shall reign in the once bright and crowded hall of banqueting (see Amos vi.). 2. With equal suddenness death shall come upon them, Hades opening its jaws to swallow the uproarious rout of revellers, as in old days the rebellious crew of Korah (Numb. xvi. 32). There is meaning in the phrase, "The unexpected always happens." To the thoughtless and unprepared it does. But to the thoughtful watchers of the ways of God, and those that meditate on his truth, it may be said that the expected happens, even as the harvest season in nature.

III. THE ABASEMENT OF MAN AND THE EXALTATION OF GOD. Deep in the prophetic conscience lies this thought—human pride means contempt of God, and human pride needs lowering that God may receive his proper place in men's thoughts. The Gentile poets in their way reflected this teaching. The man whose thoughts aimed at rivalry with the gods, the man who gave way to *hybris*, or insolence, was certain to be a mark of Divine displeasure. Cast down to his proper level of weakness, the power of the Eternal makes itself known, in an "awful rose of dawn," upon the conscience of mankind. It is suffering alone that awakens the conscience, and brings sharply to light that dualism of good and evil in the will which we contrive to confuse in thoughtless hours. And only by this internal revelation do we learn to think of One who is sanctity itself, and whose sanctity we, through life's purging fires, must be brought to share, or perish in the sins we have chosen, the lives we have lived in.—J.

Vers. 18—24.—*Analysis of sin.* I. THE VAIN AND WANTON MIND. A singular image is used. Men are described as drawing down upon themselves, as with stout and strong ropes, the burden of sin and guilt. Such is the effect of their mocking jests and speeches. Dramatically, the hearers of the prophet are represented as exclaiming defiantly, "Let his wrath hasten, let it speed, let us see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come, that we may know it!" Amos alludes to the same spirit of the time, of scoffing contempt of the signs and omens of a dread future. "Woe unto you that desire the day of Jehovah! to what end is it for you? the day of Jehovah will be darkness, and not light" (v. 18). Idly do they dream that thus they put far away the evil day which is close at hand (vi. 3). "The evil day shall not overtake nor prevent us!" they persist in saying (ix. 10). In idle and wilful minds superstitions about words are deeply lodged. By insisting that a wished event *must* take place, they think to bring it about; by repeating of something dreaded, "It shall not happen," to avert it. But mere words have no magic in them. As the incoming tide had no respect for the commands of King Knut's followers, so neither can the tidal march of moral forces be stayed by defiance or incantations. But our words and wishes have a powerful reflex effect upon our own moods. And this denial in words of God's truth must in time quite harden the conscience and blind the inner eye for them. We may shake our fist at the growing thunder-cloud, but it will not disappear. We may try to quell a demand for reform by obstinate clamours of, "It shall not be!" but only the more surely will it proceed to accomplishment.

II. CONFUSION OF MORAL DISTINCTIONS. This is a further step in the climax and progress of evil. It is indeed a serious reflection—how far we may succeed, by acts of depraved will, in shutting out the light that would stream in upon the mind, or in quenching the light within. Both are at once involved in the sin against intelligence. This is, indeed, the sin against the Holy Ghost—the sin that cannot be forgiven. How solemn are the words of the prophet elsewhere: "It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged away from you till ye die" (ch. xxii. 14)! Another serious question is, how far words may influence thought, and the

habit of saying false things disable the mind from seeing the true. South has some powerful sermons from this text, entitled "The fatal force and imposture of words." Though an absolute falsehood cannot live, adulterations of the truth may and do obtain a wide currency, just as adulterations of meat and drink in the half-dishonesties of trade. Every truth comes to us in a certain guise of falsehood; no form of language or other expression is adequate to clothe it. By insisting on the form as if it were the content, the outside as if it were identical with the inside, the part as if it were the whole, we commit ourselves to falsehood rather than to truth. The essence of social falsehoods seems to be in maxims which make the spiritual subordinate to the material. In times of physical comfort and prosperity this is always our danger. We mistake the means of living for the ends. We rest in pleasure, comfort, wealth, instead of making these the temporary standing ground of the spirit, whence it may proceed to higher levels and nobler ends.

III. SELF-CONCEITED FOLLY. We never see the full effect of sin, of heart-untruth, until it works itself out in the imagination, filling the mind with a fatuous self-complacency in its own weakness and blindness. The man thinks himself "wise," "intelligent," who, to the piercing gaze of the prophet, is clearly a fool. He thinks himself a hero, whose best exploit is to shine at a drinking-bout, and a mighty man because he can play his part at the wassail, says the prophet with keen irony. Meanwhile they are deep in bribery. They would rob the poor of his honesty, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from them. There are towns and villages where we may now see on a small scale all those evils which the prophet exposed in Jerusalem. Evil examples, old and bad customs, have so long had their way that a true standard of living seems no longer to be visible. Yet the moral tone may be restored, if there be but one man who will live like the prophet, like a Christian, salting the community by a quiet and continuous witness for rectitude, for the truth of God, and the soul.

IV. THE END OF THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER. In a powerful picture the end is depicted as the end to which all that is empty and worthless refuse must come. They are like stubble before the devouring tongue of fire, like blazing hay sinking down in light ashes, like a root struck with decay and rottenness, like flying powdery blossom. Evil is *nought*, and ends in nought. Those whose "honour has been rooted in dishonour" must perish with the perishing of their root. The decline of once great nations and cities historically proves the prophetic truth. A "name and a shade" is left of Assyria, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome. But one thing cannot perish: it is the "doctrine of Jehovah, the Word of the Holy One of Israel." And in some "remnant" that Word ever does live, to breed new life in other scenes and ages. The truth, while it slays the rebels, gives immortality to the faithful; "born again, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed."—J.

Ver. 25.—*The unappeasable wrath of Jehovah.* I. "OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." Whether to burn and destroy the moral refuse of a people, to chasten and refine its remnant and elect, he is revealed as the pure Flame. The Gentiles had a deep sense of the national significance of fire, as the pure element not to be united with aught foreign to itself. In their simple way, the hymns of the Veda to Agni, the god of fire, betray this feeling; and, again, the idea, in Greek and Roman religion, of Hestia or Vesta, on whose altar the fire was kept ever burning, who "refused to wed," whose priestesses must be virgins.

II. WAR THE SCOURGE OF GOD. Deep has been the sense also of this truth. There is an obscure perception in the minds of men that war, with its attendant horrors, comes as a retribution. Attila the Hun was spoken of as the "scourge of God." To have seen a fair city black with smoking ruins, and corpses lying in its streets, is to have read with ineffaceable impressions the lesson that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There are moments when the solid base of things seems trembling beneath our feet, the "eternal hills" as floors trembling beneath the awful tread of the Eternal as he "cometh to judge the earth."

III. THE DURATION OF PUNISHMENT. It seems as if it could not be exhausted, so vast is the mass of guilt to be purged away. A protracted war, a dragging famine, a prolonged season of ruin, seem, as we say in common speech, "interminable." The

broad blue heaven, that seemed in sunny days as a benignant hand outspread above mankind, wears the expression of a stern and relentless frown. Long scores must be followed by long payment. The guilt of centuries cannot be wiped out in a day. Divine judgment may require even the obliteration of a whole people. But the individual may be saved. At no time are Jehovah's "mercies clean forgotten." In the saddest times, the repentant heart pierces through the gloom to the sanctuary and heart of Him who slays to make alive, who by means of war reconciles to himself in Christ Jesus.—J.

Vers. 26—30.—*Foreign invasion.* This powerful picture points to the threatened Assyrian invasion.

I. THE IMAGE OF A WARLIKE ADVANCE. It is wrought out with singular boldness. Jehovah of hosts is conceived as lifting up a signal visible to the far-off nations, and sounding at the same time a whistle-cry, so that they swiftly gather together and come in troops from the horizon. Then rapid and unbroken is their march. Not a foot tires, not a warrior drowses or sleeps, or stays to rest. Not one looses his girdle, or the thong of his sandal, as the eager host presses on. The arrows are all sharpened, the bows all spanned. The sound of the horses' hoofs strike and flash like flint-stones, and the chariot-wheels roll on like the rush of a whirlwind. The air is full of a horrible roar, as of lions hastening to their unescaping prey. Such a picture is the faithful representation of the mood of the soul in its guilt and alarm. For nature reflects all our moods. Her sounds and sights are ever full of foreboding and terror to the self-condemned conscience. But the conscience at peace will throw forth its light upon all external gloom, and convert, what seem to others the sounds of hell broke loose, into the celestial times of eternal love.

II. THE IMAGE OF THE EARTHQUAKE. The rage in the heavens will be like a tempest at sea. And when the stricken ones turn to the firm land, there is a darkness which only reflects the anguish of their souls—thick darkness, and the light is hidden. No gloom we can conceive in nature, no sounds of overwhelming violence, nor sights that strike horror to every breast, can rival the terrors which the guilty soul may know. The soul is the real theatre of all these Divine dramas. So far as we can read the faces of men or look into their breasts, some stand for fear and some for hope; some the scenes of great quaking and terrors, some still conscious where the soft, still voice of the God of mercy is ever heard. As the *vox humana* stop may be used to sound the accents of prayer amidst a storm, so in trouble the psalms of the believer make a music of comfort. "God is our Refuge and Strength. . . . Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea. . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge." "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."—J.

Ver. 20.—*Giving false names.* "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Light is here cast upon the secret of Israel's defection. The "woe" has come from many causes, but here is one too often forgotten root of evil—public estimate as expressed in public speech.

I. THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE. We are all deceived at times by a fair speech that covers foul things. There is no tendency more dangerous than to call the vicious unfortunate, or the wicked gay. By this means the evil is concealed from the conscience. The prophet speaks of the tendency when it has gone so far as to exchange to opposite poles. The good is called "evil," and the evil "good." Even so "a good fellow" is often the synonym for "a bad fellow;" for revelry and selfish enjoyment, and neglect of home, often characterize the good fellow. The young are often led astray by evil, in the angel-dress of beautiful speech.

II. THE MORAL DECEIT OF SIN. We are promised brightness, good cheer, and freedom from gloom; whilst evil brings darkness instead of light—a darkness which shuts out God, and a gloom which takes away all the brightness of innocent joy. We are promised a "sweet" bread; and lo! how "bitter" it is to the taste; what a flavour it leaves behind! Afterwards! Men should think of that. Like the red wine-cup, pleasant

and luscious at first, afterwards "it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." We can never make a philosophy of life out of "first" experiences. We have only to wait and we shall find that "the way of transgressors is hard."

III. THE MORAL JUDGMENT OF GOD. "Woe unto them!" Who? Why, special woe to those who "put" it. False counsellors, like Ahithophel to Absalom; false teachers, like those who corrupt the truth. There is leadership everywhere—at school and college, in the Church and in the world. Let no man despise the warnings of God.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—7.—*Privilege and penalty.* We have a striking picture of—

I. THE FULNESS OF THE DIVINE PROVISION. (Vers. 1—4.) The second verse describes in detail the processes by which the vineyard is prepared for fruitfulness, and in the fourth verse the question is asked, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" The idea is that of the fulness of the *Divine provision for the Jewish nation.* God had provided: 1. Illustrious men—Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, etc. 2. A perfect Law; perfect inasmuch as it (1) reflected his own holiness, and at the same time (2) was accommodated to their immaturity. 3. A helpful ritual, a series of ceremonies adapted to the age and to their nature. 4. Providential discipline; all the attractive and inviting influences of prosperity together with the solemnizing and cleansing influences of adversity. We have now a corresponding fulness of provision *for mankind* in the gospel of Christ. We have: 1. The knowledge of God and of his will revealed in Christian truth. 2. The way to himself and to his pardoning love opened by the mediation and atonement of his Son, our Saviour. 3. The influences of the Holy Spirit, which are the purchase of his work and the promise of his Word. 4. The leadership of him who lived a perfect life, and offers himself as the Exemplar as well as the Friend of man. 5. The hope of eternal glory. The Author of the salvation in Jesus Christ may well address us and say, "What more could have been done?" We may almost say that the ingenuity of Divine love is spent and exhausted on the provision which is made in the gospel for the return, for the acceptance, for the renewal, for the elevation, of the children of men.

II. THE SORENESS OF THE DIVINE DISSATISFACTION. (Vers. 4, 7.) Centuries of bondage in idolatrous Egypt might well account for, if they could not excuse, a large measure of moral feebleness, of religious error, of spiritual declension. But centuries of Divine teaching and Divine discipline should have wrought much of restoration. The sovereign Ruler of Israel had a right to expect rich fruit in his well-cultivated vineyard. But he was utterly disappointed. Instead of the good grapes he looked for, it brought forth "wild grapes;" instead of judgment was oppression; instead of righteousness, the cry of him that was wronged. In us, from us, who have been the recipients of his manifold mercies and of multiplied privileges in Christ Jesus, God looks for great things; he looks for penitence, faith, purity, spiritual worth, holy usefulness. Only too often he finds the miserable and guilty opposites of these—impenitence, unbelief, continuance in sin, moral unsightliness, injuriousness of life. And the heart of the Holy One is grieved. He who would have looked with delight on his "pleasant plant" looks with pain and sorrow on the fruitless tree, on the bush that bears poisonous berries. He who would have regarded with pleasure those "in whose heart are paths" observes with indignation and regret those whose hearts are as a tangled wilderness, uncultivated and useless. For these he has only the language of severe reproach and of stern and solemn warning.

III. THE WEIGHT OF THE DIVINE PENALTY. (Vers. 5, 6.) The doom is destruction. The vineyard should, as a vineyard, entirely disappear. The defences should be removed; the useful plant should give place to the useless thorn; the elements should work for its withering, and leave nothing that was desirable or valuable. God's message to the guilty nation, Church, family, individual soul, is this solemn one—the abuse of privilege will be visited by terrible tokens of Divine displeasure; all that was promising will be removed; the signs and the sources of life will be taken away; from him that hath not (that does not use what is in his power) will be taken his present privilege (Matt. xxv. 29). He who (that which) is exalted to heaven in opportunity will be cast down to hell in condemnation and in ruin (Matt. xi. 23).—C.

Vers. 8—10.—*The character and the doom of covetousness.* The judgment denounced

against those that joined house to house and field to field brings into view the nature of the sin of covetousness, and the desolation in which it ends.

I. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE SIN. It is an *immoderate ambition*. To secure a house or a piece of land, or to extend that which has been acquired, may be not only lawful but positively commendable; it may, indeed, be highly honourable. But there are bounds beyond which this ambition may not pass, the transgression of which is wrong and soon becomes perilously evil. In the case of the Jews this limitation was defined by their statutes—by that Law which they had received direct from God himself, and to which they owed a strict and cheerful obedience. In our case ambition becomes covetousness when *it is indulged either at our own expense or at the expense of our brother*. If we are indulging a purpose which cannot be executed without moral or spiritual injury to ourselves, or without doing injustice or rendering unkindness to our neighbour, we are guilty of the sin of covetousness. To some men the transgression assumes the one form, to others the other. To some, covetousness is the craving for property or money which becomes engrossing, absorbing, positively devouring all the higher and purer aspirations; to others it is the desire and determination to secure the neighbour's good, however serious the loss they may thereby inflict. Solomon coveted many wives, greatly to his own injury; Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, shamefully disregarding his neighbour's rights.

II. ITS INSATIABLENESS. The prophet uses the language of hyperbole when he says, "Till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth" (ver. 8); but his words clearly point to the fact that when men allow their ambition to pass beyond moderate and reasonable bounds they permit it to carry everything before it, so that their earth-hunger, or house-hunger, or their thirst for money is never satisfied. However much they gain, they still crave and strive for more; it is not only gold itself but that which it will bring which is

"Hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould."

In nothing but death can the greedy eye be closed, and the grasping hand relaxed.

III. ITS HEEDLESSNESS. The concluding clause of the eighth verse not only intimates the extent to which covetousness urges its victim to go in search of a satisfaction which it does not find, but it suggests the heartlessness to which it leads. No matter who or how many are disturbed and displaced, it goes on its devouring way, even though it finds itself "alone in the midst of the land (earth)." Every vice tends to hardness of heart, to pitilessness of spirit; and covetousness not the least. Self is magnified in importance more and more, and the rights and feelings of others become of less and less consideration until they are made of no account whatever.

IV. ITS DOOM. The end of the covetous man was to be *desolation* (ver. 9) and *poverty* (ver. 10). Sin perpetually overreaches itself; and, of all particular sins, ambition "o'ervaults itself and comes down on th' other side." So far is covetousness from happiness that there is probably no more miserable man to be found in any spiritual region than is the victim of this vice. 1. *He is desolate*, friendless; hated by those whom he has injured; unloved, disregarded, or even despised, by those who watch his course. 2. *He is destitute*. *Often*, very often, avarice blinds the judgment, and the false move is made that ends in overthrow and ruin; *always*, covetousness shuts out those true treasures which make the heart rich and the life wealthy—those possessions which death cannot touch, which immortality secures for ever.—C.

Vers. 11, 12, 22.—*The evil and the end of intemperance*. When other evils have entered and other calamities have overtaken a state, intemperance is sure to make its black and hateful mark. These verses suggest—

I. ITS TYRANNY. Such is its strength that it makes its devotees "rise up early in the morning" (ver. 11) in order to worship at its shrine. It is an unnatural and detestable action; the earliness of the hour of the day might well be pleaded as a proof of innocency (Acts ii. 15). But when the passion for "strong drink" is at its height, it compels its helpless victims to break through all decencies and proprieties, and get up early in order to indulge. This is only one instance of its despotism; it leads those who "follow" it along many a path and into many a dark pit, from which they would fain

turn away but cannot. At first a small silken cord, it becomes at last an adamantine chain.

II. ITS POWER OF PERVERSION. It compels good things to minister to evil (ver. 12). "The harp and the viol," etc., are excellent things in their way and in their place; but, used for the purpose of enlivening and protracting immoderate indulgence, they are perverted to an evil and guilty end. Music is meant to cheer, to attract toward that which is good, to gladden the heart and to brighten the life of man; it reaches its highest function when, in the worship of God, it conducts the thought and utters the feeling of man toward the Supreme. Made the minister of vice, it sinks to its lowest level. The love of strong drink can thus pervert the good gifts of God to unworthy uses.

III. ITS DEGRADING TOUCH. It leads "men of strength to mingle strong drink" (ver. 22) in order that they may glory in their power of drinking. In many lands and ages men have boasted of their power to withstand the influence of the intoxicating cup. What a miserable degradation of human strength! That men who are capable of performing noblest deeds, of rendering highest service, of engaging in Divine worship, should prostitute their powers by trying to drink much wine without becoming inebriated,—this is a shocking degradation of human faculty.

IV. ITS BLINDING INFLUENCE. "They regard not the work of the Lord," etc. (ver. 12). Certainly, at the table of unrestrained revelling, God would be forgotten and his works be disregarded; but not there alone is the influence of intoxication felt. The man who gives way to this indulgence finds his mental powers becoming clouded, his spiritual sensibilities benumbed, his appreciation of the sacred and the Divine lessened if not lost. Strong drink dulls and deadens the higher faculties of the soul, and the nobler functions of our manhood are undischarged, its purer joys abandoned.

V. THE WOE IT WORKS. "Woe unto them," etc. (ver. 11)! Beyond the evils which we have been tracing to the intoxicating cup—evils which are of themselves woe enough for any one sin to work—there are: 1. The loss of physical strength and beauty. 2. The loss of reputation and of friendship. 3. The loss of self-respect and, with this, the sinking of the moral character; the upgrowth of attendant moral evils. 4. Death and condemnation.—C.

Vers. 13—17.—*The calamities of spiritual ignorance.* The miseries which are unfolded in this passage are ascribed, in the thirteenth verse, to ignorance. "My people are gone, etc., . . . because they have no knowledge." But it is necessary to distinguish here. We must consider—

I. THE IGNORANCE WHICH IS SPIRITUAL AND THEREFORE GUILTY. There is ignorance which is entirely mental and which is wholly guiltless; *e.g.* that of the little child who cannot understand some of the obligations into which we grow, or that of the heathen who cannot possibly acquire a knowledge of Christ and his salvation. There is a mental ignorance which is *not* guiltless, but culpable; viz. that of the man who has not acquired the information he had the opportunity of gaining in earlier days, and that of the man who goes down through iniquity and immorality into intellectual feebleness and impotence. But the ignorance of which our text treats (ver. 13) is not mental, but *spiritual;* it is that of the whole spiritual nature rather than of the understanding; it is that of men who had a formal knowledge of God and duty, but who did not lay it to heart and did not act upon it. It is the ignorance of the *nation*, which might, if it would, understand what the will of God is in the matter of Divine worship, or in regard to its poor and uninstructed members, or to its uncivilized and helpless neighbours; but which will not take the trouble to ascertain it, or even blinds its eyes so that it shall not see it. It is the ignorance of the *individual man*, who has indeed an undefined knowledge of his obligations to his Father and his Saviour, but who studiously keeps it out of view; who will not present it to the eyes of his soul, lest he should be constrained to reproach himself and to change his course. These are they who "have no knowledge," in the sense of the prophet.

II. THE CALAMITIES WHICH IT ENTAILS. These are manifold, as the passage intimates. They include: 1. *Exile*—"going into captivity" (ver. 13); dwelling in a "far country;" being, spiritually, where all is strange and alien and hostile, a long way from God and from the privileges of his house and the enjoyment of his service. 2. *A void and*

aching heart. "The honourable men are famished, and the multitude dried up with thirst" (ver. 13). *Not* knowing God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, depriving themselves of the deep and lasting satisfactions of his favour and friendship, men find all material sources of joy utterly unsatisfying; they eat, and hunger still; they drink, but "thirst again." 3. *Impoverishment.* (Ver. 4.) The nation that does not act up to the height of its knowledge and its opportunity, that is not governed by its sense of right and duty, but by its inclination to pride and pleasure, is a nation that will decline; it will soon be stripped of its power. "*Hades* will open its mouth without measure," and "swallow up" its glory, its eminence, its joy; it will be bereft of all of which it boasts, for the hand of the Lord will be against it, and his righteous judgments will overtake it (ver. 16). 4. *Humiliation.* (Ver. 15.) 5. *Mortification.* How unspeakably mortified would those Jewish captives be to find themselves pining in a foreign land when their own fields at home were unoccupied, the spoil of the roving flock, the prey of the marauding stranger (ver. 17)! And how bitter must be the mortification and self-reproach which *they* must feel who have to realize the results of their guilty spiritual ignorance; who have to see that, afar off and beyond their reach, are joys which they might have shared, honours which they might have won, spheres which they might have filled, a large heritage which was their own but which will never be theirs again!—C.

Vers. 18, 19.—*Sin in its strength.* We have here some thoughts about sin.

I. ITS EVIL GROWTH. Whatever the precise thought of the prophet, his words (ver. 18) are strongly suggestive of the fact that sin gradually attains a terrible power. Its "pull" may at first be that of a silken thread; presently it becomes that of a strong string; then it is found to be that of a hard wire; finally it reaches that of a "cart-rope." And this, whether we regard the sinner as (1) the man *no* whom iniquity acts, or as (2) the agent *through* whom its force is exerted on others. In the one case he is moved only with great difficulty, and often the bond which is thrown about him snaps in twain; but, in time, sin gains strength, and it pulls him as with a rope that cannot be broken. In the other case—probably the one here intended—he himself hardly succeeds, sometimes fails, in leading men astray; but in course of time he draws his neighbours along the road of wrong-doing with ease; the tie by which he holds and by which he constrains them is stout and strong. He draws sin "as it were with a cart-rope." 1. Shun the first overtures of the ungodly; have *nothing* to do, in the way of friendship, with the enemies of truth and righteousness. 2. If men have acquired a fascinating power over you, there is no deliverance from their evil grasp save by genuine penitence and an earnest appeal to the Almighty Friend; *his* hand can cut the strongest cords of sin.

II. ITS FEARFUL CULMINATION. Sin reaches its summit when it stands on the height of impious defiance of the living God (ver. 19). Reverence shrinks with a holy reluctance from taking such words into its lips, even when it simply quotes the utterance of impiety. Yet men are found in the path of sin who will employ such language without remorse! In the earlier stages of ungodliness men would be shocked at the idea of doing and being that to which a continuance in irreligion naturally leads up. That puny man should positively defy his Maker seems antecedently unlikely, if not impossible. Yet glaring facts too plainly prove that an evil course does not stop short of even this extreme. What awful possibilities of evil reside within a human soul! How unmeasurably wise it is to place ourselves under the guidance of the great Teacher, to have our hearts the residence of the Holy Spirit! Then, but only then, are we safe from moral enormities which are a thousand times more to be dreaded than the extinction of our being.

III. ITS RIGHTEOUS DOOM. "Woe unto them!" And they *shall have* woe! They may say in their shameless arrogance, "Let us break their bands asunder," etc.; but "the Lord shall have them in derision . . . he shall vex them in his sore displeasure" (Ps. ii. 3—5). They may "set their mouth against the heavens," and may say, "How doth God know?" but "how are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (Ps. lxxiii. 9, 11, 19). God will overturn their purposes; he will scatter their friendships and leave them in helpless loneliness; he will bring them into an intolerable humiliation; he will condemn them at his judgment-bar; he will sentence them to eternal exile.—C.

Ver. 20.—*Spiritual perversity.* Antecedently we should hardly have expected that a being created in the image of God, a rational spiritual agent, would so far depart from all that is reasonable and right as to put evil for good, and good for evil, etc. Yet such is the case. We have to consider—

I. THE FACT OF SPIRITUAL PERVERSITY. Human perversity is not found in the higher region only. We find it in *things physical*, notably in our treatment of the body. Men take noxious drugs, thinking that they "do them good," while they shrink from plain and wholesome food, as unpalatable and undesirable. In *things economical.* They shut their markets against the commodities of other nations, supposing that they are thereby benefiting their own citizens, when they are only injuring their neighbours and impoverishing themselves thereby. And so in other spheres of activity. In *things spiritual* the fact is most painfully apparent. 1. In our direct relation to God. Some men are found who condemn all worship as superstition, all earnestness as fanaticism, all piety as hypocrisy; the same men speak of atheism under the euphemism of free-thought; with them godlessness is emancipation from spiritual bondage! 2. In our relation to our fellow-men. There are those who call clemency weakness, and oppression vigour; who denounce considerateness as mawkish sentimentality, and honour a brutal selfishness as cleverness and spiritedness; who sneer at conscientiousness as being "priggish," and talk of roguery as if it reflected honour on its agents. 3. In our relation to ourselves. There are too many, especially among the young, who consider dissipation to be another thing for "life," and who decry purity and self-restraint as dulness and poverty of spirit; they have honourable terms for the vilest and foulest sins, and terms of discredit for the cause of virtue and self-respect. Thus is everything misnamed, and *not only misnamed but mistaken.* These words are more than mere labels; they represent the thought which is beneath; they stand for false conceptions. All things, human and Divine, are seen in false lights, are regarded as other than they are, indeed as the *very opposites of* what they are; the evil and shameful thing is positively admired as well as praised; the holy and the beautiful thing is actually hated as well as cursed! These are the sad facts which are before our eyes.

II. ITS EXPLANATION. How can we account for such perversity as this, such a sad and disastrous revolution in the mind? It is surely due to the deteriorating influence of sin upon the soul. He that sinneth against God wrongs his own spiritual nature. Sin blinds, distorts, discolours; not, indeed, suddenly and altogether, but gradually and constantly. A man who falls under the power of any temptation is something the worse in mind as well as in heart for his sin; his mental conception as well as his moral habit is injured—imperceptibly, perhaps, but not unimportantly. And by slow degrees the mind is affected and the view is changed, until everything is reversed in thought and in language (see Matt. vi. 22, 23).

III. ITS END. "Woe unto them!" But what worse penalty can be inflicted than this? Surely they *have* their reward, in the overthrow of their reason, in the darkening of their mind, in the deterioration of their soul. Truly; yet are there not other evils which must be endured? Will not the light of eternity flash into these guilty souls, showing them whereto they have fallen and wherein they have erred, awakening the sensibilities which they have sent to slumber, stirring up in them the remorse which is due to those who have so wronged themselves, so ill-treated their fellows, so sinned against the Lord?—C.

Ver. 21.—*The pitiful estate of the proud.* We may well commiserate those who are "wise in their own eyes," inasmuch as—

I. THEY HAVE A FALSE CONCEPTION AS TO THEIR OWN CAPACITY. They think themselves able to determine what is true and beautiful and good, when they are painfully and pitifully in need of guidance from without; their estimate of themselves is essentially wrong. They "live in a fool's paradise."

II. THEY ARE SHUTTING OUT FROM THEIR MINDS THE TRUTH WHICH WOULD REDEEM AND ENNOBLE THEM. The blessing of the Lord is promised to the humble-hearted, to those who have the docility of the little child. It is they, *and they only*, who are willing to empty themselves of their own fancies and follies that they may receive the eternal truth of God. The men who think themselves wise can find no room in their

minds for those Divine teachings which save, which purify, which enlarge, which transform the heart and life (see 1 Cor. iii. 18).

III. THEY ARE IN A SPIRITUAL CONDITION WHICH IS POSITIVELY AND EVEN PECULIARLY OFFENSIVE TO GOD. The Word of God, Old Testament and New, is studded with texts in which the displeasure of Almighty God is revealed against the haughty of heart. God "resists" the proud, and causes them to fall. It is the arrogant Pharisee who is *not* justified in the great Teacher's parable, who is continually rebuked by the Lord of truth, who is repeatedly condemned by the Searcher of souls. We may therefore conclude, concerning those who are prudent in their own sight, that—

IV. THEY ARE ALL UNREADY FOR THE GREAT DAY OF TRIAL. They will then find themselves rejected instead of being accepted and commended, and to the gloom of condemnation will be added the bitter mortification of being utterly and miserably disappointed.—C.

Vers. 24—30.—*The judgments of the Lord.* These verses are obviously pictorial and figurative; they must be treated as highly hyperbolical or they will be misconceived. Though their primary reference is to the judgments which impended over the guilty nation, we may discover in them some principles which not only extend to every age, but apply to every individual soul.

I. THAT THE INDIVIDUAL AS WELL AS THE NATION MAY BE THE OBJECT OF THE AWFUL ANGER OF ALMIGHTY GOD. "The anger of the Lord is kindled against his people" (ver. 25). Without attributing to the Divine Spirit the very same sentiment as that which fills our human minds, we may and should feel that the burning indignation of which we are conscious when we witness wrong-doing is the reflection of the "anger of the Lord" against all unrighteousness; and we do well to think that what we now feel in regard to others God may feel toward us, if, like his ancient people, we fall into disobedience and condemnation. Well may we, "who are his offspring," shrink from the high displeasure of the holy Father of souls.

II. THAT GOD'S ANGER IS EXCITED BY OUR INATTENTION AND DISOBEDIENCE. "Because they have cast away the Law . . . and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel" (ver. 24). The evil thing which God hates takes many forms, the later and darker ones being shocking even in the sight of good men. But they all spring from a disregard of his will as revealed in his Word. Despising the Word in the mind leads to a casting out of the Law from the rule of life, and thus shows itself in all kinds of iniquity. He who is neglecting the will of God, as that will is stated in his Word, is at the source of the stream of sin, and is in danger of being carried down to the rapids of destruction.

III. THAT THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE SOMETIMES SWIFT IN THEIR APPROACH. "They shall come with speed swiftly." Sometimes they are "leaden-footed but heavy-handed;" yet at other times they speedily overtake the transgressor. At all times, indeed, a violation of righteousness is instantly attended with some spiritual injury and loss; but, beyond this, the more apparent punishment often comes with rapid march to confront and confound the transgressor.

IV. THAT THESE DIVINE JUDGMENTS ARE SOMETIMES UNEXPECTEDLY PROLONGED. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (ver. 25). Men are apt to think, when they have suffered some great adversity, that God has poured out his anger, and that they may thenceforth expect continuous prosperity. But they overlook the two facts: (1) that at any time in each man's life there is a vast amount of unpaid penalty for which God may righteously punish him, and (2) that God is seeking a remedial as well as a punitive end in his inflictions, and that impenitence has always reason to fear—perhaps we should more properly say *hope*—that the hand of the Lord will still be stretched out in the attitude and act of correction.

V. THAT THEY ARE IRRESISTIBLY STRONG. "Their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust," etc. (ver. 24; see vers. 27—30). God's judgments cannot be evaded; there is no escape from them by human strength or cunning. They move up with steady, unflinching step (ver. 27); they strike with unerring aim and piercing power (ver. 28); they reach the source as well as the sign of prosperity—root as well as blossom (ver. 24); they leave no way of escape open—seaward, heavenward, landward (ver. 30). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

the day long;" and presently he comes to pray, with a great intensity of feeling, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." There is a sense in which, like Jerusalem, our "day of grace may be passed," and we may be left to ourselves, to the woe of being ourselves only.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The difference between what God asks and what God gets.* The original terms of this verse contain a very striking play upon words, which can but imperfectly be rendered into English. "He looked for judgment (*mishpat*), and behold oppression (*mishpach*); for righteousness (*tsedakah*), and behold a cry (*tseakah*) of the oppressed for help." Dr. C. Geikie translates the verse thus: "And he hoped for deeds of good, but, behold, there are only deeds of blood; for righteousness, and, lo! there is only the cry of the oppressed." The appeal of God is applicable to all the ages, and, taken in a large sense, may be also applied to us. It should be our exceeding distress that so often we give to God quite other things than he asks of us.

I. GOD ALWAYS ASKS FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The reference in the text is to public justice; right dealing between man and man; due considerateness for others; and the faithful administration of laws, both social and ecclesiastical. The people ought to be honest in all their dealings, and the magistrates just in all their decisions. But God asks for "righteousness" in a much higher sense than this. The creatures he has made in his image he wants to be like himself. "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The righteousness that he asks from us he has shown us in the person and the life of his dear Son. It is for us no vague thing, gathered up into a great and somewhat mysterious word; it is, plainly and practically, our being changed into Christ's image, and bringing forth fruits of goodness like his. This may be fully worked out and illustrated along three lines. The righteousness God asks of us is (1) loyalty to his revealed truth; (2) obedience to his declared will; and (3) manifestation, in practical life, of the spirit of heavenly, Divine charity.

II. GOD OFTEN GETS "OPPRESSION" AND A "CRY." Here, too, the first suggestion is of social and national evil; injustice of magistrates, and masterfulness of the strong and wealthy over the poor. Everything was carried by clamour and noise; wickedness had usurped the place of judgment. But here, too, the response made to God may be dealt with in a larger way. The essence of all "oppression" and "cry" is somebody's self-seeking spirit and self-seeking ways. In this we grieve God. He asks life for him, and for others in service to him; and we give him life full of *self*, that can even trample over his poor in accomplishing our own self-ends. So we, too, come under the Divine reproaches and judgments.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The covetous spirit, and its judgment.* The picture presented in this verse can be matched by the conduct of our English king, who destroyed the villages to make the New Forest; or by the makers of deer-forests in North Britain, who have driven away the natives. In Isaiah's time the wealthy men were buying up the houses and estates, and destroying the old village life of Palestine. "In the place of the small freeholders, there rose up a class of large proprietors, while the original holders sank into slavery, or tenants-at-will, paying exorbitant rents in kind or money, and liable at any moment to be evicted" (Dean Plumptre). Bishop Latimer, in the sixteenth century, makes a bold protest against the enclosure of commons. Grasping after property is almost always connected with a neglect of charitable duties and a willingness to sacrifice the good of others. Such accumulation of landed property was fundamentally opposed to the Mosaic regulations. Illustrate by the law of jubilee, which made all land in Palestine purchaseable only *on lease* (comp. Numb. xxvii. 1—11; xxxiii. 54; 1 Kings xxi. 4; Lev. xxv. 8—17).

I. LIVING TO GET. There are three ways of looking at life; three things which we may supremely aim at in life. 1. We may live *to get*. South says, "The covetous person lives as if the world were made altogether for him, and not he for the world; to take in everything and part with nothing." Austin defines covetousness as a "dishonest and insatiable desire of gain." The Prophet Micah describes such persons, "They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." The tenth commandment wholly

forbids our making any personal gain the end and aim of life. Show under what self-deceiving forms this covetous desire *to get* ensnares men nowadays. 2. We may live *to be.* That is, to culture ourselves, and win the worship of men for what we are, in talent, skill, and virtue. This is nobler; and this is, in measure, right and good; yet it has this exceeding moral peril, that it keeps us in the self-spheres. It may easily pass into the degrading thing—covetousness for fame. 3. We may live *to serve.* This is the Divine idea of life for us. This is the Christ-like pattern of life for us. This is the kind of life that suffering, sinning humanity asks for from us. They who can live *to serve* are, with Christ, after Christ, and in his strength, the world's saviours, and the God-glorifiers.

II. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ON HIM WHO LIVES TO GET. Those judgments will come as natural agencies, as fixed results of ever-working law, and as circumstances for which men may think to find easy explanation; but they are none the less direct Divine judgments. Such judgments on the covetous take two forms. 1. Character is debased by the constant getting and grasping. This may be effectively illustrated in the case of the apostate Judas. No moral deterioration is so serious or so certain as that of the covetous man. Hardening against his fellow-men, he is hardening against God. Crushing out all considerateness and all charity, he loses men's love and God's smile, and is wretched indeed when he has got all, and is "placed alone in the midst of the land." If any poor creature of our humanity calls for our supremest pity, it is surely the man who has lived to get, and made his immortal soul grovel among mere possessions. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." 2. The calamities of life will prove utterly ruinous to the covetous. Because they will touch them at their tenderest point, destroying their *gains.* The picture presented in the verses is a most affecting one. By the insecurity of the land the fine mansions are uninhabited, and the fields are neglected. Travellers tells us of the humiliating sight of decayed mansions in the East. War and civil commotion, often the natural result of the masterful ruling of covetous men, make property valueless, and so the evil brings round its own judgment. The law works universally, sometimes quickly, at other times slowly, so that men presume on its delaying, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Apply by inquiring what is the end and aim of life to the hearers. Jacob would *get,* and he got years of homelessness, hard toil, and care. Achan would *get,* and he got an early and dreadful death. Gehazi would get, and he got the leprosy. Ananias and Sapphira would get, and they got a sudden destruction. Woe—earth cries for it, and heaven sends it—woe, sooner or later, for very one who liveth that he may get, and is utterly unworthy of him who, showing God to us, went about among his fellows as "One that serveth."—R. T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The sin of dissipation.* That which is here reproved is not mere drinking habits; it is the riotous feasting and wasting which characterizes the sensualist. Early drinking was considered by the Jews, as it was by the Romans, a mark of the most degraded sensuality. "In the time of Isaiah, the sensual Jews appear to have employed musicians, and all kinds of merry-makers, as dancers, mimics, buffoons, etc., such as are still common all over the East." "They shocked public feeling by morning banquets" (Eccles. x. 16, 17; Acts ii. 14). Morier says, "The Persians, when they commit a debauch, arise betimes, and esteem the morning as the best time for beginning to drink wine, by which means they carry on their excess till night." Dissipation, in its comprehensive sense, is the temptation and the sin of our young men, especially of those belonging to the wealthier classes. The excitement and rioting of it may be illustrated by the following true incident. When inflamed with wine, a young man was challenged to eat a five-pound note. Placing it between slices of bread, in wild foolishness and wickedness, he actually destroyed the note in this way. We fix attention on the wastefulness of dissipation, and point out that it is a grievous sin before God, as abusing his sacred trusts. Illustrate from (1) the trust of *time;* (2) the trust of *property;* (3) the trust of the *body;* (4) the trust of the *mind;* (5) the trust of the *power to serve others.* Show how mischievous is the influence exerted by the familiar saying, "Young men must sow their wild oats." They should have no wild oats to sow; and if they have any, the very last thing they should do with them is *sow them,*

for they will surely spring up, and bear, for their reaping, a harvest of woe unspeakable. F. W. Robertson says, "There are men who 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' They whet the appetites by indulgence. They whip the jaded senses to their work. Whatever the constitutional bias may be—anger, intemperance, epicurism, indolence, desires—there are societies, conversations, scenes, which supply fuel for the flame, as well as opposite ones which cut off the nutriment. Such a man is looking forward to a harvest wherein he may reap the fruit of his present anticipations. And he *shall* reap it. He has sown to the flesh, and of the flesh he shall reap corruption. This is in his case the ruin of the soul. He shall reap the harvest of disappointment—the harvest of bitter, useless remorse. His harvest is a soul in flames, and the tongue that no drop can cool."—R. T.

Vers. 18, 20, 21, 23.—*Four grievous sins.* The ungodly spirit finds very various modes of expression in wilful and self-pleasing actions. Men's sins are repeated over and over again in every age, sometimes taking more open and defiant forms, and sometimes hiding behind a pleasant outward show of delicacy and refinement, but always the "abominable things which God hates." The coarse sins of Eastern peoples seem offensive to our sensitive Western nations; but the sins are here amongst us, only in a disguise which deceives us. Isaiah reproves—

I. THE SIN OF PRESUMPTION. (Vers. 18, 19.) Evil-doers are thought of as harnessing themselves to the chariot of sin; as bold enough even to scoff at God's threatened judgments, and taunt him with his merciful delayings, saying, "Let Jehovah hasten; let him hurry on his work, that we may see it." Wordsworth paraphrases ver. 18 thus: "Woe to them that harness themselves as brute beasts to iniquity, with cords of falsehood, and drag on the weight of sin, as a waggon, with the ropes of vicious habits." Illustrate by the scoffing thief on the cross; and by the parable of the man who presumed upon his abundant harvest, and found he was suddenly called away from all his wealth. Presumption is the evil into which men are led through temporary *successes*. See the effect of prosperity on Nebuchadnezzar. It is a constant effect of luxury and self-indulgence and immorality. It is the brink of utter and irretrievable ruin. For the presumptuous man there is little hope. He must fall, and be bruised and crushed, ere he will learn lessons of humility and trust. David knew human nature well, and he taught us to pray, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

II. THE SIN OF CONFUSING MORAL DISTINCTIONS. (Ver. 20.) "Those do a great deal of wrong to God and religion and conscience—to their own souls, and to the souls of others who misrepresent [evil and good], and put false colours upon them; who call drunkenness good fellowship, and covetousness good husbandry, and, when they persecute the people of God, think they do him good service; and on the other hand, call seriousness ill nature, and sober singularity ill breeding, and say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness." (Matthew Henry). The text well describes the spirit of our age. In our over-refinements we are losing the sternness of the truth, carefully polishing off every edge and point and corner that might prick conscience into activity. We are toning down moral distinctions until they are becoming quite confused and indistinct; we can hardly tell for certain what is right and what is wrong, what is evil and what is good. One of the most thoughtful of American divines, Dr. J. A. Alexander, writes thus: "Do not we with one breath assert the inviolable sanctity of the truth, but with the next breath make provision for benevolent, business, jocose, or thoughtless falsehood? Do we not, in the abstract, assert the claims of justice, and the obligation to give every man his own, but, in application to specific cases, think it lawful to enrich ourselves at other men's expense, or take advantage of another's weakness, ignorance, or error? Do we not admit the paramount importance of religious duties in general, but in detail dissect away the vital parts as superstition, sanctimony, or fanaticism? Do we not approve the requisitions of the Law, and the provisions of the gospel, in so far as they apply to other people, but repudiate or pass them by as applying to ourselves? What is all this but saying of evil, it is good, and of good, it is evil?"

III. THE SIN OF SELF-CONCEIT. (Ver. 21.) The first reference is to counsellors, "whose ideal of statesmanship was a series of shifts and expedients, based on no principle

of righteousness." This form of sin is too familiar to need much suggestion as to its treatment. God resisteth those who are conceited of their own wisdom and lean to their own understanding. "Seest thou a man wise in his own eyes? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

IV. THE SIN OF CORRUPTING JUSTICE. (Ver. 23.) "Who clear the guilty for a bribe, and take the rights of worthy men from them." The idea is that justice is sacrificed to meet the demands of an expensive luxuriousness. So men now grind the faces of those who work for them to support their own extravagances. No greater evil can come upon a land than the poisoning of the fountains of justice; and there is no more certain source of national discontent hastening to rebellion. The prophet was himself deeply moved by the picture of the evils of his time which rose up before him. Nowhere could he look and gain the relief of a hope. Such an utterly wicked people must suffer. Seaward he looked, but there was not one gleam of light. Landward he looked, but not one gleam of light. Such is the end of wickedness. Bold though it may seem, defiant as it may sound, long as it may appear to hold out, this is the issue of it—dark, all dark. The very "light is darkened in the heavens thereof."—R. T.

Ver. 20,—*The importance of adequate impressions of sin.* We seldom hear sin spoken about now as the old prophets spoke about it. We do not think about sin as the defiance of God, the attempted overthrow of his authority, the expression of the soul's hatred of God, and therefore calling for terrible vindications of the Divine power and claims. In reading biographies of very holy and devoted Christians, we have observed that they had deep and overwhelming impressions of the evil of sin—impressions quite beyond the reach of our sympathy. Perhaps we have inclined to call them morbid, and to think such views were the result of diseased imaginations. The truth, however, is that these holy men and women had visions of the infinite holiness of God. They saw the "sapphire throne," and they trembled and veiled their faces before the exceeding majesty of the Divine purity. They saw themselves and sin truly and worthily, because they saw these things in the full clear light of God. We do not so see them, because we do not live near enough to God. Take as a specimen the following sentences of John Bunyan—surely as honest and sincere a man before God and his fellows as ever lived: "My original and inward pollution—that was my plague and affliction. That I saw at a dreadful rate, always putting forth itself within me. That I had the guilt of to amazement. By reason of that I was loathsome in my own eyes, and I thought I was in God's eyes too. Sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart as water out of a fountain. I thought that every one had a better heart than I had; I could have changed hearts with anybody. I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell, therefore, at the sight of my own vileness, deeply into despair." Making all allowance for the quaintness of this language, and for the spirit of the age in which Bunyan lived, do we not feel that his Christian life became so noble because his foundations had been laid so low? And we need more worthy apprehensions of the essential hatefulness and evil of sin to lie as the foundation-stones on which we may rear our godly life. 1. All the great truths and doctrines of Divine revelation rest upon the fact of human sin. Repentance, justification, atonement, redemption, sanctification, all assume the fact of our sin. It is too much the habit to discuss these doctrines as if they were merely questions of science, having a general intellectual interest; but with the smitings of guilt on our hearts, and the avenger of blood at our heels, they become intensely real; they are no less than the conditions of the soul's safety in the city of refuge. We should understand them so much better if we had more soul-moving impressions of the evil and the guilt of our state before God. 2. All the Christian graces depend on deep views of sin. That possesses our souls with pity and charity and long-suffering towards others. That makes and keeps us humble. The believing man is he who, in his self-helplessness, has learned to lean wholly. The hopeful man is he who has cried "out of the depths" unto the Lord. The man who feels for others is he who "knows the plague of his own heart." 3. All the earnestness and zeal of Christian work depend on worthy views of sin. Are men perishing in sin? then we must rescue and save them. John Howe says, "Shall our Redeemer be left to weep alone over perishing souls? Have we no tears to spend upon this doleful subject? Oh that our heads were waters, and our eyes

fountains! Is it nothing to us that multitudes are sinking, going down to perdition, under the name of Christian, from under the means of life and salvation—perishing—and we can do nothing to prevent it? We know they must perish that do not repent and turn to God, and love him above all; that do not believe in his Son, and pay him homage as their rightful Lord." We are guilty before God in neglecting to keep vivid in our hearts humbling convictions of sin; and we may trace to this neglect our imperfect impressions of the holiness of God, of the majesty of his Law, and of the necessity for atonement by blood-shedding. We may also trace to this neglect our easy subjection to the pleasures and vanities of the world; our indifference in the pursuit of Christian virtues, and our coldness and deadness to the claims of Christian work. To see sin rightly we must see it—

I. IN THE CONSEQUENCES TO WHICH IT LEADS. We wonder why these stern writings of the old prophets are preserved, and make up so large a portion of God's Word. They are needed to keep before us the connection between sin and suffering, to show the wickedness of sin by the bitterness of its consequences. We do not need either old prophets or new ones to convince us of the fact of sin. Conscience and observation suffice for that. Nor do we need old prophets or new ones to convince us of the fact of suffering. But we do need them to convince us of the connection between the two. And that was just the mission of the old prophets. In vigorous language they describe dreadful famines, devouring pestilences, the march of myriad locusts, frightful scenes of battle-fields and siege, the desolation of fair countries, the exile and captivity of nations. But they never leave us to imagine for a moment that such things are mere calamities. They are consequences of sin; the whirlwind which those reap who sow the wind. They try to make us see behind the apparent order of cause and effect, and they say, "Ye have provoked the Lord your God to anger, therefore hath all this evil come upon you." Sin is invisible. Sin is pleasing to our corrupt nature, and we will not see its true character. So God writes it up before our eyes in bodily, social, national, hereditary woes. Illustrate from the end of the avaricious man, the drunkard, the presumptuous, etc., as given in this chapter.

II. IN THE CONTRAST OF GOD'S MERCIFUL DEALINGS WITH US. It is mostly in this way that God is accustomed to present sin to us. See the opening parable of this chapter. Sins and vices look hateful indeed, as staining and debasing poor Africans. Drunkenness is hideous, corrupting the poor islanders of the Southern Seas. But what do such things look like, putting to utter shame the enlightened islanders of Christian Britain? Are not lust, and passion, and greed, and drunkenness, and down-treading the poor, and neglecting the offered salvation, aggravated immensely by God's abounding mercy to us? God pleads his mercy (see Hos. xi. 3, 4). We plead thus: Do you think, if you had lived in Christ's days, you could have gone on sinning on the very knoll of Calvary, under the very shadow of the cross on which your Saviour died? Could you have cast lots for his raiment with those rough gamesters, danced a merry round about his cross, and done the deeds beneath his very agony which now stain your life? It may be that very thing which you are, in spirit, doing now. The shadow of the cross has never passed away; it lies right across Christian England to-day. We live through our daily lives beneath it. It is not really a dark shadow; it is transformed; it is the Lord's rainbow of love shining through tears. It arches our whole sky. Its presence glorifies all goodness; but its presence also aggravates all sin, all self-indulgence, all neglect of God. The issue, the final issue, for all who sin under the very shadow of the cross—that no human lips can describe, as no human imagination can conceive. That must be the woe unspeakable, the dreadful day of God.—R. T.

Vers. 24, 25.—*God's judgments through natural agencies.* The Prophet Isaiah lived in anxious times. He was keenly observant of the social and moral features of his age—a discerner of the "signs of the times." He was sent by God to show the people how national wrong-doing bore its sure fruitage in bad harvests and in national calamities and to help them to see in such fruitage the operation of Divine judgments. In the text the prophet clearly sees trouble coming on apace, and taking form as scant and withered harvests, either through unkindly seasons or the visitation of locusts. "Their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust." Ewald well describes the social conditions which Isaiah observed in their more serious aspects in relation to

the Divine will and Law. "The constant increase of the power and security of the realm, and the profusion of an age rendered prosperous by the development of arts and distant commerce, were accompanied by an equally vigorous growth of other things; the craving for enjoyment and luxury among the people, and especially among the women of the capital; the foolish predilection for foreign manners and foreign superstitions of every kind, and a wantonness of life, from which many, even of the judges, were not altogether free, and under which the defenceless inhabitants had to suffer with increasing severity; all of which Isaiah, the great prophet of his age, who lived in Jerusalem, recognized and depicted in the sharpest outlines." Dean Stanley gives a yet more striking picture of that luxurious age. "The luxury and insolence of the nobles was in a high degree oppressive and scandalous. Bribery was practised in the seats of judgment, and enormous landed property was accumulated against the whole spirit of the Israelite commonwealth. With the determination and, we may add, the avarice of their race, they laid their deep schemes at night, and carried them out with their first waking. They "did evil with both hands;" they skinned the poor to the very quick; they picked their bones and ground them to powder. The great ladies of Zion were haughty, and paced along the streets tossing their necks, and leering with their eyes, walking and mincing as they went, covered with tinkling ornaments, chains, bracelets, mantles, veils, of all fashions and sizes." Isaiah declares that Jehovah observed all these moral and social evils, and that he used the agencies of nature to execute his judgments on such sinners. They would find, when the harvest came round, that "ten acres of land would only yield one bath, and the seed of a homer would only yield an ephah." God would smite them through the fields. Is Isaiah's teaching obsolete? Does God speak to the men of this age by the voice of nature? Having found out that the world is ruled by law, have we gained the right to banish the Lawgiver? Whether men call us superstitious or not, we unhesitatingly say that God is in the harvest still, and its limitation is the voice of God calling on us to humble ourselves concerning our social and national iniquities. That this is a right and reasonable view to take will appear if we consider—

I. MAN IS SENSITIVE TO NATURE, AND NATURE TO MAN. If we are still thus sensitive, God can use nature still as a medium by which to communicate his will to us. Nature has not yet become one of the dead languages; God can speak to us in it. We are affected by the nature-moods of each passing day. Crisp frost braces us to exertion; glowing sunshine and clear skies are reflected in bright and cheerful feelings; cloudy, dull days make our work drag heavily. Storm-times fill us with fear. Everybody anxiously observes the character of the seasons. The nation alternates between hope and fear as reports come of rains, or late frosts, or blight, or flood. Nature is ever bringing to us messages from God, gracious testimonies of his acceptance or of his reproof. And no voices are so loud or so clear as those of the harvest, which is God's yearly replenishing of our exhausted stores, and so the intimation of Divine regard or Divine disfavour. And nature is sensitive to man, and responsive to man's conditions and doings. Go into some parts of our land, some metal and mining districts, and notice how nature, in response to man, has changed her aspect. Her trees cannot live. Her atmosphere has become damp and chill. See her fields responding to man's draining. She now runs off her moisture in sudden and desolating floods. See the thick smoke-cloud hanging over great towns. Nature responds by breeding fatal diseases beneath it. God is ever fitting issues to actions, and in the issues revealing the character of the action. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Visit the Holy Land, now desolate and barren, once fruitful and cultivated. It has but responded to the destruction of its timber, by the invading armies that have tramped over it again and again. The prophets seem to have, as one great part of their mission, to show that changes in seasons, loss of fruitage, bad harvests, fearful storms, locusts and caterpillars, are really the judgment-responses of nature to the doings, the wrong-doings, of men. Close up our Scriptures if it is no longer true that God speaks to men through nature; for St. Paul says, "God gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." Surely the invisible things of God may be clearly understood by the things that are made.

II. NATURE CAN STILL BE USED AS AN AGENT OF DIVINE JUDGMENT ON MAN. If God is, then he cannot pass by sin. If God visits the sins of cities and of nations as such,

then he must find some instruments of chastisement which will directly affect cities and nations. His instruments may be the destructive forces of nature—famine, pestilence, fear, and war—which directly reach corporate and national feeling. Herein is a curious thing. Men are ready enough to hear the voice of God when he sends a bountiful harvest. The whole land rings with the harvest-song, and men do not mind our saying that God sent the harvest. But how blind and deaf men become when harvest fails! Our blessings come from God; but how we try to make out that our disasters are only consequences of some unwisdom, or some neglect of social or agricultural laws! We need not see God's hand in them. Let us not, however, be afraid of either side of the great truth. If God would recognize our faithfulness to him, he can find rich golden corn, and sunny autumn for its ripening and its ingathering. If he needs to chastise, and awaken in us the sense of sin, then he can make withered ears stand in the fields, summer floods damage the shocks, and sunless autumn hinder the ripening. Can it ever take away from the judgment-aspect of national calamity that we are able to explain how the earth, in its movements through space, has come into a damp region, or into a cold region; how certain atmospheric conditions have developed the blight; and how the current of certain winds has brought the locusts; and how a disturbance of nature's limiting agencies has developed unduly the caterpillar? But if God speaks to us in judgment, let us never forget that he really speaks to us in mercy. He ever blends mercy with judgment; and the response he asks from our hearts will go into the old words: "Come, let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." "To the Lord our God belongeth mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."—R. T.

SECTION III. ISAIAH'S VISION OF GOD UPON HIS THRONE (CH. VI.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Vers. 1—4.—THE VISION OF GOD SEEN BY ISAIAH. It is thought by some that this vision, and its sequel, constitute the original call of Isaiah to the prophetical office, and in order of time precede all the other contents of the book. But the position of the "vision" in the book is strongly against this view. Prophets who relate their original call naturally place it in the forefront of their narrative (Jer. i. 10; Ezek. i. 1). It is quite possible, as Bishop Lowth says, that this was "a *new* designation, to introduce more solemnly a general declaration of the whole course of God's dispensations in regard to his people, and the fates of the nations." The vision itself may profitably be compared with Ezekiel's first vision, which it much resembles (Ezek. i. 4—28).

Ver. 1.—**In the year that King Uzziah died.** The year B.C. 759, probably. We cannot determine from the phrase used whether the vision was seen before or after Uzziah's death. **I saw also**; rather, *then it was that I saw* (comp. Exod. xvi. 6). **The Lord.** Not "Jehovah," as in vers. 3 and 5, but "Adonay," for greater reverence. **Sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.** The imagery is, of course, taken from the practice of earthly kings. Elaborate thrones were affected by the great monarchs of Egypt and Assyria (Lepsius, 'Denkmäler,' pt. iii. pls. 2, 76, 100, 121; Layard, 'Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 150). Solomon's throne was perhaps even grander than any of these (see 1 Kings x. 18—20). It was placed at the summit of "six steps," so that its occupant was "high and lifted up" above all his courtiers. **His train.** Not his train of attendants, but "the skirts of his robe." Flowing robes were commonly worn by great monarchs. **Filled the temple**; or, *the palace.* The same word is used in Hebrew for both. Dr. Kay supposes the prophet to be "in vision gazing on the actual temple—to see its veils drawn aside, and instead of the Shechinah enthroned on the cherubim, to behold the King of glory, enthroned on high, the fringes of his royal robe filling the temple, so that no human priest could minister there." But, as Mr. Cheyne observes, "palace is more in harmony with the picture than temple." It is the heavenly palace of the King of kings into which the prophet's gaze is allowed to penetrate.

Ver. 2.—**Above it stood the seraphims**; rather, *above him were standing seraphim.* The "seraphim" are introduced, not as well known, with the article, but without it, as unknown. The word means "fiery ones."

and is supposed to denote the burning love of the blessed spirits spoken of. They appeared to the prophet as standing above the King as he sat upon his throne—"standing" to show their readiness to minister; but why "above him" is not so clear. Perhaps, simply, as those that stand are "above" those that sit; perhaps as ready to fly through infinite space at the bidding of him who was seated in his palace, as it were upon the ground. Their form, as seen by the prophet, appears to have been human, and only distinguished from ordinary humanity by the wings. Thus, though in name they resembled those other "fiery ones," which had punished the Jews in the wilderness (Numb. xxi. 6—9), there is nothing to show that Isaiah in any way connected the two. **Each one had six wings.** Gesenius is mistaken in saying that there are at Persepolis any six-winged figures ('Thesaurus,' p. 1342). The Persians not unfrequently represented their genii with four wings ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. pp. 353, 354); but no six-winged figures have been found, so far as I know, among the Persian remains. **With twain he covered his face,** etc. The general idea of the six wings was probably rapid flight, the carrying out of God's behests "with speed swiftly." But, in the Divine presence, the wings were applied to a different use. One pair veiled the seraph's head from the intolerable effulgence of the Divine glory; another concealed the feet, soiled in their various ministrations, and unmeet for the all-pure presence; the third pair alone sustained the seraph in mid-air, as he hovered in readiness to depart on any errand on which Jehovah might send him.

Ver. 3.—**One cried;** rather, *kept crying* (comp. Rev. iv. 8, "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy"). But the prophet scarcely goes so far; he describes only his vision—they did not rest while the vision was vouchsafed him. **Holy, holy, holy.** The Church on earth has taken pattern by the Church above; and the "Trisagion" is ever being repeated in one part of the earth or another without ceasing: "Thou continuest holy, O thou Worship of Israel." There is no attribute so essential to God as this. It is for his holiness, more than for anything else, that his creatures worship him. The triple repetition has been understood in all ages of the Church as connected with the doctrine of the Trinity. Holy is he who has created us, and bidden us worship him in the beauty of holiness! Holy is he who has redeemed us, and washed away our sins, and made us by profession holy! Holy is he who day by day sanctifies us, and makes us in very deed and truth, so far as we will permit him, holy! **The whole earth is full of his glory.** Even in heaven the seraphic thoughts are turned to earth, and its relation to its Divine Creator is made the subject of angelic utterances (comp. 1 Cor. iv. 9; Heb. xii. 22). The lesson which they gather from their contemplation, even under all the miserable circumstances of the time, is a cheering one: "The whole earth is full of God's glory." Men, whether they will it or not, are working out God's purposes, advancing his designs, accomplishing the ends that he desires (see Homiletics on ch. v. 25—29).

Ver. 4.—**The posts of the door moved;** rather, *the bases of the thresholds shook* (compare Revised Version). The shout of the seraphs shook the very foundations on which the thresholds of the gates of heaven rested—a testimony to the energy with which it was uttered. **At the voice of him that cried;** *i.e.* "at the voice of each and all." **The house was filled with smoke.** "Smoke" is sometimes the mere sign of the presence of God, as in ch. iv. 5; but more often it indicates his presence in anger or judgment (see Exod. xix. 18; xx. 18; Rev. xv. 8). Here there had been no smoke at first, and we must suppose it, therefore, a sign of the anger which finds vent in ver. 9—12.

Vers. 5—7.—THE SEQUEL OF THE VISION—THE PROPHET'S SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS. The vision of God in this life, whether natural or ecstatic, cannot but produce in the beholder a deep feeling of his unworthiness. God "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" even "the heavens are not clean in his sight" (Job xv. 15). Man, being never wholly purged from sin while on earth, cannot but shrink from contact with the absolutely Holy. Hence Isaiah's cry (ver. 5); and hence, to comfort him, the symbolic action of the seraph (ver. 6) and his encouraging words (ver. 7).

Ver. 5.—**I am undone;** literally, *cut off, destroyed* (comp. ch. xv. 1; Jer. xlvii. 5; Hos. iv. 5, 6, etc.). God once said himself, "There shall no man see me and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). Men expected to die even when they had seen angels of God (Gen. xxxii. 30; Judg. vi. 22, 23; xiii. 22). How we are to reconcile Exod. xxxiii. 20 with this passage, Job xlii. 5, and Ezek. i. 26—28, is uncertain. Perhaps the *ecstatic* sight was not included in the "seeing" of which God spoke to Moses. **I am a man of unclean lips.** A man must be indeed "perfect" never to offend in word (Jas. iii. 2). Isaiah felt that he had often so offended. His lips were not "clean" in God's sight, and if not his lips, then not his heart; for

"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). **I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.** Men catch up the phraseology of their time, and use wrong forms of speech, because they hear them daily. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33).

Ver. 6.—**A live coal**; or, *a glowing stone*, as Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Knobel, and Mr. Cheyne understand (comp. 1 Kings xix. 6, where a cognate word is used). **The tongs . . . the altar.** The presence of an altar in the heavenly dwelling, with the usual appurtenances, is assumed (comp. Rev. vi. 9; viii. 3). The altar is, no doubt, an altar of incense, and of gold, not of stone; but the incense is burnt upon stones heated to a glow, and it is one of these stones which the angel takes with the golden tongs of the sanctuary (Exod. xxv. 38).

Ver. 7.—**He laid it upon my mouth**; literally, *he caused it to touch my mouth*; i.e. "he touched my mouth with it." He brought it into contact with that part of him which the prophet had recognized (ver. 5) as the seat of impurity. **Thine iniquity is taken away.** By the contact the prophet's impurity is purged, and he is freed from it. The symbolical act showed (1) that sin could be purged; (2) that the highest angelic nature could not, alone and of its own force, purge it; and (3) that the purging could come only from that fire which consumes the incense that is laid upon the altar of God. Dr. Kay suggests that this fire is "the Divine love."

Vers. 8—13.—THE PROPHET ENTRUSTED WITH A SPECIAL MISSION. We do not know what special call Isaiah had had previously. Perhaps he had been brought up in the "schools of the prophets." Perhaps, when the "word of the Lord" came to him, he had accepted the fact as sufficient call. Now, however, he had, in vision, a clear and distinct call and mission (vers. 8, 9). He was told to "go," and instructed as to what he was to say (vers. 9, 10). As before (ch. i.—v.), while in the main he was to denounce woe, he was still to proclaim the survival of a remnant (vers. 10—12).

Ver. 8.—**Whom shall I send?** (comp. 1 Kings xx. 20). Such questions enable those who wait in the courts of heaven to show their zeal and readiness. **Who will go for us?** Some explain the plural pronoun as used of the Almighty and those with whom he is consulting. But he does not really "consult" his creatures (*infra*, ch. xl. 14; Rev. xi. 34), nor do his messengers do his errands *for them*. The plural form is best explained by the light which ver. 3 throws on it, as indicative of the doctrine of the Trinity (comp. Gen. i. 26).

Ver. 9.—**Hear ye indeed . . . see ye indeed**; literally, *In hearing hear . . . in seeing see*—with the force of "Listen and hear; look and see;" "Attend," that is, "with the outward sense, and catch all that sense can catch, but without perception of the inward meaning" (see Matt. xiii. 14; Mark iv. 12, etc.). This is what they would do. Isaiah is bidden to exhort them, in grave irony, to do it.

Ver. 10.—**Make the heart of this people fat.** Isaiah is commanded to effect by his preaching that which his preaching would, in fact, effect. It would not awaken the people out of their apathy, it would not stir them to repentance; therefore it would only harden and deaden them. The words have a national, not an individual, application. **Shut their eyes**; literally, *besmear their eyes*; or, *seal them up*. Such sealing has been employed by Oriental monarchs as a punishment. **And convert**; *i.e.* "turn to God." Our translators have used the word in an intransitive sense.

Ver. 11.—**Then said I, Lord, how long?** Either, "How long am I to continue this preaching?" or, "How long is this blindness and callousness of the people to continue?" Isaiah assumes that he has not heard as yet God's final purpose; that there is some merciful intention kept in reserve, which is to take effect after the close of the period of judgment. **The cities . . . the houses**; rather, *cities . . . houses*. An *entire* desolation of the whole land, and extermination of its inhabitants, is not prophesied, and never took place. Nebuchadnezzar "left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen" (2 Kings xxv. 12; Jer. xxxix. 10). Even when the great mass of these persons went into Egypt and perished there (Jer. xliv. 11—27), a certain number escaped and returned to Palestine (Jer. xliv. 14, 28). **The land**; rather, *the ground, the soil*.

Ver. 12.—**And the Lord have removed men far away.** The Assyrian and Babylonian policy of deportation is pointed at. Pul had attacked the kingdom of Israel ten or twelve years before Uzziah's death, and had perhaps made the Assyrian policy known, though he had allowed himself to be bought off (2 Kings xv. 19, 20). **And there be a great forsaking**; rather, *and the desolation be great*; i.e. till a great portion of Judah be depopulated.

Ver. 13.—**But yet in it shall be a tenth, etc.**; rather, *and should there still be in it a tenth*; i.e. should there still remain, after the great deportation, a tenth part of the inhabitants, "this again shall be burned up," *i.e.* shall be destined to further judgment and destruction. The trials of the Jewish nation under the Persian, Egyptian, and Syrian

monarchies may be intended. **As a teil tree, and as an oak**, etc.; rather, *as the terebinth tree and as the oak*—trees which shoot up again from the stock after being cut down; or, as the prophet expresses it, "have a stem in their destruction." So to Judah shall remain, after all, a "holy seed," which shall be its "stem" or "stock," and from which it shall once more "take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (ch. xxxvii. 31).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The vision of God.* Sight is a thing of degrees. The healthy eye sees with infinite shades of distinctness and indistinctness, according to the amount of light which is vouchsafed it. The diseased eye has an equal variety of gradation in its powers of seeing, owing to the variations in its own condition. And it is with our spiritual as with our natural sight. The vision which men have of God varies infinitely with varying circumstances—from extreme dimness up to perfect distinctness. Amid this infinitude of gradation, depending mainly on the internal condition of the visual power, three main varieties, depending on the circumstances under which the spiritual sight exerts itself, may be distinguished.

I. THE NATURAL VISION OF GOD IN THIS LIFE. This is, even in the best men, dim and unsatisfying. "Now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). We have to look within us and without us; and, among the confused shadows of things, as sight and memory and imagination present them to us, we have to piece together a conception of that mysterious and inscrutable Power which alone exists of itself and has brought all that is beside itself into existence. How should not the vision be unsatisfactory? Agnosticism denies that any conception which we can form can possibly bear any resemblance at all to the reality, if there be a reality. Agnosticism, to be consistent, ought not to go so far, but should content itself with saying that we cannot tell whether there be a resemblance or no. Some conception, however, of God all men form who reflect at all; and there is so much likeness among the conceptions of men of all times and countries as to point to some basis of truth underlying them all as the only conceivable ground of the similarity. The conceptions differ less in their essential character than in their vividness and their continuousness. Most men "see God" dimly and rarely—by snatches, and as through a cloud or mist. A small number have a somewhat clearer and more frequent vision. To a few only is it given to "set God always before their face," and to see him with something approaching to distinctness.

II. THE ECSTATIC VISION OF GOD IN THIS LIFE. It has been the privilege of some great saints to be lifted up from earth into that condition which is called ecstasy, and while in that state to have a vision of God. In ecstasy Moses saw "the glory of God" from the "cleft in the rock" on his second ascent of Sinai (Exod. xxxiii. 18—23; xxxiv. 6—8). In ecstasy Isaiah now saw him. In ecstasy Ezekiel saw him "by the river of Chebar" (Ezek. i. 26—28). So St. John the divine beheld him in the island of Patmos (Rev. iv. 2—11). The exact nature of such visions we do not know; but it is only reasonable to suppose that they were, to those favoured with them, revelations of God more distinct, more vivid, more satisfying, than any which belong to the ordinary course of nature, even to those which are vouchsafed to the "pure in heart" (Matt. v. 8). They fall short in respect of duration; they are transient—some of them, perhaps, momentary. But their vividness seems to have so impressed them on the beholders as to have given them a *quasi*-permanency in the recollection, which made them possessions for life, and gave them an undying influence on the character.

III. THE BEATIFIC VISION OF GOD IN ANOTHER LIFE. What this is no tongue of man can tell. "Eye hath not seen," etc. We know only what the Word of God declares. "Then shall we see him *face to face;* then shall we know *even as we are known*" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). That this vision transcends even the ecstatic one is reasonably concluded, from its being the final reward of God's saints—the beatitude beyond which there is none other (Rev. xxii. 4). But it is scarcely reverent to speculate on a theme so far above human imagining. Even Bishop Butler seems to overstep the just limit, when he supposes the beatific vision to include the contemplation of the scheme of the universe in the mind of him who contrived it ('Sermon on the love of God,' p. 146). We shall not know what the beatific vision is until we are admitted to it.

Perhaps it will not be the same to all. Probably, as on earth "the eye sees that which it brings with it the power of seeing," so, in the world beyond the grave, the vision of God will stand in a certain correlation with the seeing faculty of the beholders. All will "see his face," but all will not be capable of receiving from the sight that which it will convey to some. There are degrees of happiness in the next world no less than in the present. If we would derive from that blessed sight all that God intended man to derive from it, we must in this life cultivate the power of "seeing God" and delighting in the contemplation of him.

Ver. 5.—*Man's unworthiness brought home to him by nothing so much as "seeing God."* The natural man is, for the most part, very well contented with himself. He does not deal much in self-scrutiny, and is not often troubled with twinges of conscience. If at any time he has any misgivings, he compares himself with other men, and readily persuades himself that he is quite as good, or even very much better than his neighbours. "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," is his self-satisfied utterance; or, if he is not quite so arrogant as this, at any rate he thinks himself "quite good enough"—as honest, industrious, liberal, moral generally, as he needs to be. Occasionally he may be startled a little out of his self-complacency by coming in contact with persons of a different stamp from himself, whom he sees to have a different rule of life, a different conception of their duties to God and man. But it is seldom that he wakes up to any true conviction of sin until in some way or other, there is revealed to him some "vision of God," some conception of the true nature of that pure and holy Being who has made and rules the universe. Once let him open the eye of his soul and see God as he is—perfectly pure, holy, just, immaculate—and he cannot but be driven by the contrast to recognize his own weakness, wickedness, impurity, unrighteousness, deeply engrained sinfulness. *Some* conviction of sin must flash on him. Well for him if it be deep and strong! Well for him if it brings him, first to confession (Luke xviii. 13), and then to earnest, heartfelt prayer for pardon! God's seraph will then haply bring him such a "burning coal" from the altar before the throne of God as he brought to Isaiah, and convey to him the assurance that, for the merits of Christ, his "iniquity is taken away, and his sin purged."

Vers. 11—13.—*The loving-kindness of God shown in his judgments.* "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me," says the psalmist (Ps. cxix. 75). No doubt, at last God must simply punish the obdurate and impenitent; but for the most part he sends his judgment upon men in mercy, either to turn them from their sins, or to refine and improve their characters.

I. EVEN WHEN GOD SIMPLY PUNISHES, IT IS IN LOVING-KINDNESS TO MANKIND AT LARGE. When a nation, like Israel, as distinct from Judah, has persisted in evil-doing for centuries, in spite of warnings, teaching, remonstrance, knowledge of the truth, its case is hopeless—"there is no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). The blow that then falls upon the nation is penal and final—the requital of its ill desert. But if the blow is dealt to the nation itself in mere justice, it is also struck for the benefit of all neighbouring nations, in mercy. It warns them from their evil ways; it says to them, in a voice which they can scarcely fail to hear, "Take heed, lest ye too perish."

II. MOST OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE CHASTISEMENTS, SENT TO TURN MEN FROM THEIR SINS. "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us" (Heb. xii. 9), when we had done wrong, and strove thereby to deter us from evil. So God acts with his children. So he chastened Judah, bringing calamity after calamity upon her, until at last there was a "remnant" which truly turned to him, and became the germ of the Christian Church. So he has chastened many a nation besides. So, too, he chastens individuals, sending on them sickness, and poverty, and loss of friends, and other misfortunes, to check them in a career of sin, and cause them to pause, and reflect, and tremble at his mighty hand, and humble themselves under it, and change their course of life. In this way he chastened David by the loss of Bathsheba's first child, and by the revolt of Absalom and Adonijah; Hezekiah by war and sickness; Solomon by "adversaries" at home and abroad. Of this kind again are the natural punishments which he has attached to sins, the natural tendency of which is to deter men from them.

III. ONE CLASS OF HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRIALS, SENT TO PROVE MEN, AND THEREBY TO PURIFY THEM AND RAISE THEM TO GREATER SAINTLINESS. "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John xv. 2); "The trying of your faith worketh patience" (Jas. i. 3). Christ himself, we are told, was in his human nature "made perfect through suffering." The discipline of affliction is needed for forming in us many of the highest Christian graces, as patience, resignation, forgivingness, mildness, long-suffering. The sons of God are taught to expect a chastening which shall be "for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. xii. 10).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The prophet's call and consecration.* There are turning-points in life which give a meaning to the whole of its after-course. A light may be given to the mind at such moments by which it may have to steer its course for years. In moments of despondency the man of God will fall back on memory, and encourage himself by the recollection that, having once received and followed Divine guidance, that guidance will not desert him in the future. Such was this moment in the history of Isaiah. Life stood before him like a crowded picture; he foresaw the difficulties with which he would have to contend, yet that picture did not dismay him. "Like Christ from the first beginning of his Messianic labours, he thought of the end, nor did he shrink from the image of death, so that the fact as it came nearer only confirmed what had not seemed strange from the beginning" (Ewald). It is the sense, not of our own faithfulness, nor of our own means, but of a Divine destiny working in and through us that must be our support in weak and lonely hours. To feel that we are moving against the course of the sun, even in the midst of external comfort or popular applause, is to be weak and unnerved; while a stern yet sweet joy fills the soul in the prospect of duty and danger, in which, though we seem to fail, we must be victors for ever. Every true man has his hours of prophetic revelation; and well for him whose will is strong, and who abides by the truth of that revelation through good and through evil report, unswervingly to the end.

I. THE VISION OF THE DIVINE MAJESTY. 1. *Its date is fixed in memory.* "The year that King Uzziah died." Dates are the resting-places of memory and fancy, around which accumulates the lore of our years. The accessions and the deaths of kings, battles, peaces, revolutions, acts of parliament that wrought weal for the people,—such are the dates of nations. And every soul has its epochs—birth, youthful events of pleasure, love, struggle, defeat, success; and for each there must be more to him than the events recorded in the calendar. The most "uneventful" year, as we speak, is eventful for the hidden sphere of many a spirit. How faint and poor are our public memorials of history compared with those private recollections which are written in the invisible ink of memory! Let us own that history means, first and foremost to every one of us, the history of our own spirit. By a Divine providence the fragment of an Isaiah's, a Jeremiah's, an Ezekiel's autobiography is preserved through the ages, to remind us that the inner life, the contact of God with the soul, is our real concern, our deepest interest. Between the two dates on the tombstone that will mark our entrance into the world, our passage from it, what a record must lie, stored in the archives of eternity—of visions beheld, of voices heard, whether obeyed or disregarded! "In the year that King Uzziah died." 2. *It is a vision of the sublimity of God.* Seated on a high, exalted throne, God in this image is conceived under the analogy of the Ruler. Father and Ruler—such is the Bible view of God; his rule based upon his fatherhood, his fatherhood imparting benignancy and tenderness to the sterner character of the Lawgiver of the universe. But here the Father seems for the moment absorbed in the awful Sovereign, whose throne is in the heights of heaven, his footstool earth. It is only his skirts that are visible to the awe-struck gaze of the prophet. Amidst the most magnificent scenes of external nature, the Alps or the Andes, we may gain a passing soul-expanding vision of the Highest—still only part revealed, but much more hidden. The verdure bejewelled with flowers, the forests glancing with the lustre of dazzling birds of plumage,—these may represent the vesture

of the great King, hinting an unutterable beauty on which none can look and live. And so in the inward or moral world. In the history of a people or of a man there are moments when God, in the still more impressive might of his holiness, sweeps by, an awakening and a purifying Spirit. Or in higher moments of devotion we may gain a momentary glimpse of that pure love, so full of terror yet so full of blessing, which burns at the core of things, and whose light is reflected in the light of every human conscience. Yet these are partial revelations, like that to the prophet; glimpses of the skirts of Jehovah's majesty, tastes of a "burning bliss" which in its fulness could not be endured. It is this sense that there is a beauty all around us, ready at any moment to break into glowing manifestation, were not our mortal eyes too dim to look upon it; an eternal music from which this "muddy vesture of decay grossly closing us in" protects us, which otherwise might paralyze by its thunderous tones;—it is this sense which does, or which should, impress an habitual reverence upon the mind. We should all be able to look back upon moments of our history when we have seen in the inner chamber of the mind something of what Isaiah saw, and to cherish the recollection as a lore never to be forgotten. For if we have never known a time when we were reduced into insignificance in the presence of God, and felt that he was all and we were nought, and that the best tradition about God must be hushed into silence before what we personally *know* of God, we have missed an elementary lesson which, when once obtained, adds weight and worth to all our after-experience. 3. *The seraphs and their song.* "Seraphs stood high around [or, 'above'] him." It is impossible to gain a true notion of the seraphic figures without consulting works of art. Like the cherubim and the griffins and the sphinxes, their origin is in the remotest fore-time. All these were, in fact, among man's earliest efforts to represent to himself in visible art the Divine power which he felt to be working in and through nature; in the flash of the lightning, the thunder's roar, the might of the blast, and all those mysterious sounds and sights which usher in the changes of the year. As this is the only place where the seraphim are named, their character must remain for the most part speculative. Similar winged figures are, however, found in Oriental sculpture (such as those in the British Museum) as attributes of a sovereign. And we can hardly be wrong in considering them as appropriate signs of Jehovah's sovereignty over nature in the vision of Isaiah. Wings in art-figures generally denote the wind. If, then, we compare the passages in the Old Testament whence Jehovah's power is described as revealed in storm and wind, *e.g.* Ps. xviii. 10 ("He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind") or Ps. civ. 3, 4 ("Who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh his messengers spirits, his ministers a flaming fire"), we may gain a fair understanding of what is meant. The stormy winds at the turning-points of the year reveal force—the force of the omnipotent Creator. And at the same time, the Creator is concealed behind, as well as revealed in, these expressions of his might. And so the seraphic figures are seen by the prophet doubly veiled by their own wings—in face and feet. For we can neither look upon the face of God nor follow the viewless track of his footsteps. As the noble verse of Cowper aptly expresses it—

> "God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants his footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm."

We shall not be far wrong if we find this truth symbolically set forth by the six-winged seraphic figures of the prophet's vision. But the wind is full of music as well as of might, and the seraphs give utterance to a solemn song, which falls into two members, sung antiphonally by these celestial choristers. "One called to the other," just as the priests in the temple-music below. Profound and weighty is the burden of this alternate chant—

> "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts!
> The fulness of the whole earth is his glory!"

How shall we think of the holiness of Jehovah? As *height*, like that in which the seraphs sing—a nature and a life so "far above" our base and grovelling ways? Alas

for us, if we do not ever recollect in our worship that, high as yonder empyrean above this "dim spot that men call earth," distinct as the clouds in fleeciest white from the stagnant and foul spots below, are the thoughts of Jehovah above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways! Shall we think of holiness as *separation*? Woe to us if we know not that purity, which, like the flame, refuses to wed with ought that is alien to itself; which, like the light, divides and discriminates the evil from the good wheresoever it comes! The thrice-holy God is none other than the supremely pure Intelligence, the perfect chastity of Love. But the infinite glory as well as the holiness of Jehovah is celebrated. It is the "fulness of the earth," teeming with life, throbbing with mysterious forces, covered with a rich robe of rare embroidery, holding rich treasures in her keeping; which embodies to our thought the nature of God in its vast *extent*, just as the pure sky represents the *intensity* of that nature as a principle of holiness. Silent and inaccessible as sun and stars, he is yet near to us in the throbbing of great nature's heart—nay, of our own.

"Speak to him, then! for he hears, and spirit with spirit may meet;
Closer is he than thy breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

"God in all"—this was the thought of Paul the apostle, as of Isaiah the prophet. Incarnate in the flower and in the stem, vocal in the "sound of many waters," or in the tinkling of brook or murmur of zephyr; there is nothing in the world in which he is not revealed.

"Thou art, O God, the Life and Light
Of all this wondrous world we see!
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from thee:
Where'er we turn, thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are thine."

4. *The voice of God.* A loud cry is heard even above the hymn of the seraphim, and it causes the thresholds to tremble. The thunder was among all ancient nations listened to as the voice of God. It is the natural expression of supreme and irresistible power, before which man, in the last height of his own intelligence and power, must bow. Instantly the smoke soars from the altar, and the temple is filled with smoke. Worship is man's answer to God's voice—the answer of his conscience, the answer of his heart. Nor can we truly worship without the sense of being face to face with unutterable mystery. For behind the most glorious visions remains he "whom no man hath at any time seen, nor can see;" at the heart of the thunder is that Divine emotion which must slay us were it fully discharged into our souls. The rising smoke may fitly typify that sacred silence, the "offspring of the deeper heart," in which our worship should begin and end.

II. THE PROPHET'S CONSECRATION. 1. *The effect of the revelation on his mind.* First, there is the *sense of utter weakness.* When the true glory of the spiritual world bursts upon us, it seems as if we must die. Every difficulty conquered brings us a new sense of strength; every human being we have fairly faced in the consciousness of our own manhood we may reduce to our own level; for one man is virtually the peer of every other, the world over. But who can look and live in the presence of the white intense light of the pure and burning Spirit of God? Already, like Abraham (Gen. xviii.), the man feels himself as if reduced to "dust and ashes;" or, like Moses, that he cannot see the Eternal and live, but must shelter himself in a cleft of the rock, and hide behind the hand of God (Exod. xxxiii.); or, like Manoah, forebodes a deathful doom as he gazes into the mystic altar-flame (Judg. xiii.). In Greek and other Gentile legends we read of children receiving a nightly birth of fire as the condition of immortality, the meaning of which was that none but those destined to divinity could endure the fiery ordeal. Profound enigma of our nature! that we to whom has been imparted the longing for life eternal, the dim consciousness of an undying destiny, should yet know moments when we seem on the verge of "dusty death." But the man whom God calls to be mighty in word and deed must pass through the whole gamut and scale of human emotion, from the lowest mood of self-distrust to that of loftiest confidence in God. No note must be left unstruck in our own heart, if we are to

make it sound in the conscience of others. There is, besides, the *consciousness of inefficiency*. The very calling which already glimmers before Isaiah's mind as his is that for which he finds himself unfit. He is to be a *nabi*, a prophet; that is, a man of fluent lips and pure, through which the streams of Divine eloquence are to flow. Alas! how can this be? For he is a "man of unclean lips," and will not the truth be muddied passing through them, and so cease to be truth? All this is a typical experience. The man who has never felt unfit will never be fit for any great thing. Jeremiah, at his call, felt that he was "a child;" and Moses that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Exod. iv. 10); and John fell at the feet of the Son of man "as one dead," brain and hand paralyzed, before he took up the pen that glowed with apocalyptic fire. Who is the fit man for God's ends? The self-confident man? It depends on what we mean by "self-confidence." Appearances deceive; the show of strength is not the same thing with strength itself, nor the demeanour of weakness a certain index of inefficiency. To read our own hearts is our business. And heart-experience may teach us that absolute confidence in our resources bodes humiliation, while trembling self-distrust may hint that something is to be done by God through us. "Do the very thing you are afraid to do," is in certain moments the voice of conscience and of God. So it proved in this instance. 2. *Purification and pardon.* One of the burning beings flies to the prophet's side, bearing a *heated stone* (for such seems to be the meaning of the word *ritzpâh*) forming part of the altar, and detached without difficulty from it. With this he touches the lips of the trembling seer, saying, "Lo! this hath touched thy lips, and so will thy guilt depart, and thy sin may be atoned for." More meaning can be condensed into a symbolic action than into any mere words. Fire is the enemy of all impurity; and the idea of a fire-baptism as the means of cleansing is deeply rooted in the lore of olden time. In this respect it seems nearly allied to the sprinkling of blood. And just as when Moses sprinkled all the people with the sacrificial blood, or the priests sprinkled the altar and other sacred objects, one drop seemed sufficient to diffuse ceremonial cleanness on the object on which it fell, so the mere touch of the hot coal or stone is enough to signify the completeness of the purification. It is not the quantity of the fiery element, but the quality, which does the work. A small spark may kindle a mass of fuel, or, falling on the hand, spread a keen pain through all the nervous network of the body; so a glimpse of God, a touch from his hand, may change the mood of our being for a lifetime. It may set up a glow which shall not die down till all that is selfish, sensual, base, in us shall lie in ashes. The sense of guilt lies deep in the mind; and never is it so clear and keen as in moments of bodily sickness or mental depression. The moment when we are tempted to say, "I cannot help it," there rises up the thought that there is help in God, and therefore that we are *not* helpless. No sooner does the cry of weakness, the complaint concerning the unclean lips, escape Isaiah, than the eternal evangel, in all its supernatural strength to heal, comes home to his heart. For this is the eternal gospel in its essence, whether borne by lips of seraph, prophet, or Son of God: "Thy guilt will depart, thy sin may be atoned for." And in those blessed moments when we grasp this message in its fullest meaning, and believe it in its inmost truth, the heart is set free, and, despite present fetters and prisons in which fact or fancy holds us bound, we know that it will not ever be thus. Then, indeed, the yoke of duty becomes easy, the burden of toil, for the sake of the love which pardons and emancipates, light. 3. *The call to service.* Again the august and dominant voice of the Eternal is heard: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" A ready answer, full of devotion, full of self-abandonment, comes from that lately overwhelmed heart: "Here am I; send me." Out of weakness Isaiah has been made strong, and there is no hesitation now. There is "triumph lingering in his eyes, wide as of some swimmer's who descries help from above in his extreme despair." The foolish imprudence which cries, "Here am I; send me," without having calculated the cost of the enterprise and the extent of the resources, is not that of Isaiah. Still less is the unfaithful trifling with one's powers and opportunities under the excuse of modesty, or the delight in dreams of action rather than in action itself, seen in him. We see some men rashly staking their future on the cast of a die, impetuously crossing a Rubicon; others lingering on the brink, or moving superstitiously in a fancied circle, beyond which seems to lie the frowning impossible. And we see a third class who have learned the

Divine magic of the word "obey," and who alone move safely and with high heart to ends greater than their dreams. The servant's readiness, his quickness of eye and ear, is what we need. Can we allege that we have never seen our vision, heard our call from the unmistakable voice? If the plea be sound, then our mistakes and aberrations cannot be charged against us. But can we maintain such plea so long as there is any meaning in the words "truth" and "duty"? Truth is ever beckoning to us, duty's low clear voice is ever sounding, though the paths to which they guide lie but dimly before. The call to act is for us all; the call to act greatly but for God's elected few. Let us not mistake our wishes for Divine commands, nor in vanity create a destiny which is only our own fiction. Still less let us treat impressions which have seized us and shaken us with awe, and against which reluctant flesh and blood have struggled, as dreams to be set aside and fancies to be overcome. If, after straining eye and ear, God seems to leave you through wide tracts of life's way to struggle with your ignorance and to work out your problems unaided,—be it so. This is your call. If otherwise you are the subject of strong and extraordinary impressions, reaching into the reality behind the shows of things, hearing with open ears where others know but confused sounds,—be it so. Your call is more direct. If only we will not indulge the blindness of those who will not see, the deafness of those who stop their ears, the proud weakness of those who hate to obey, all may be well.

III. THE MISSION. 1. *It will be thankless and disappointing.* Isaiah is to go and waste, as it seems, his eloquence upon dull ears, upon intelligences sealed up, and hearts that are proof against religious feeling. The light of truth as it streams from him will encounter rocks that will not melt in the sun, natures that can neither be softened nor sweetened. It is the height of a preacher's joy when every word comes back to him a silent echo from the conscience of the people; and his day of mourning is when he feels himself to be speaking in a valley full of dry bones, or before beings who seem to have life and conscience, yet are but as spectres of men. In his best moments it seems that all the eloquence is in the people, and he is "gathering up in a mist" from them that which he is to "return upon them in a flood." In other moments of discouragement it seems that he is alone in the world, with a sublime cry upon his lips, now become meaningless, because there are none to whom it has a meaning. We know the legend of St. Antony preaching to the fishes; and, indeed, it seems better to talk with the dumb creatures whom we can win to silent sympathy, than to a people which "does not consider." The company of the ox or the ass seems better than that of men who have become as "stocks and stones, and worse than senseless things." The preacher and teacher will know these trials, and let him recollect that it is no uncommon experience. We find its pathos repeated in different ways in all the great prophets, in John the Baptist, the "voice in the desert," and in Christ himself. Are we to cease crying when the echo ceases? Rather let us go on until we hear once more the truth coming back to us. Let us believe that what is true to us in our inmost heart will one day be true for all the world. One of our great countrymen said that he was wont to iterate the same statement again and again until he heard it on the tongue of common talk; and this was a statesman to whom the people owed the greatest material blessings. The test of truth is not the way in which it is received, but the immediate reflection of it in our own mind. 2. *The gloom of the time will deepen.* "How long, O Lord?" The answer describes a prophet shut in by clouds and mist, or overhung by some all-pervading pall of gloom. Sin is to go on working out its waste, until there be an empty and depopulated land. "Things bad begun to make themselves strong by ill." And there are times when evil must be left to gather to a head and run its full course. It may even be the part of the prophet to hasten it on its way. But when we say, "Things are getting worse and worse," let us remember that beyond the worst remains the best, and after last returns the first; for God is the principle of an inexhaustible and unconquerable life. 3. *The gleam of hope.* There is now visible at the close a gleam on the dark horizon, denoting a coming dawn. A section, an elect few, a tenth, will survive these coming disasters. The fire of judgment and purification, of which the burning seraphs are symbolic, must wither the goodly branches of the national tree, and leave the stem all blackened and charred. Still the stump will remain with its root still fastened in the earth. "Just as the trunk of terebinth or oak, deeply and ineradicably sunk in the earth,

bears constantly new shoots, an image of eternity and immortality, springing from an inward "rejuvenating power," so with the spiritual life of the nation and the individual. Here, then, we see how the deepest seriousness and sadness is yet compatible with undying hope. (1) The nation that hopes in the Eternal can never perish. That terebinth root lives on; all fresh developments of Christianity spring from its undying life. (2) The man who hopes in the Eternal shall be saved. He may, he must, pass through the fire of trial; but if he endure to the end, he shall be saved. Amidst his ashes he will discover fresh life; for there is hope of the tree, and hope of the man, that though felled, he shall rise again. (3) Holiness is the secret of life. It is health, it is the sanity of the mind which has made truth its portion, God its delight, and his service its eternal choice.—J.

Ver. 8.—*The call of God.* "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." The symbol of the seraphim had been on the prophet's head, and the voice of the Lord had come to his conscience and his heart. The live coal had touched his lips. Prophets, apostles, teachers, must be sent of God. Other qualifications are appropriate and excellent, but this is indispensable.

I. THE DIVINE QUERY. "Whom?" Then God takes *thought* about Divine government in human history. Just as Nature expresses, in all her forms of beauty, his skill and care, so in grace God is observant of character, and watchful for the wisest means. He knows the secret places of grace and genius, and he can call them forth at the appropriate time. Isaiah now; Paul in the great epoch to come.

II. THE ELECTIVE HONOUR. "Whom shall I send?" Here we have the sublime election to privilege, so far as responsibility is concerned, which, rightly considered, explains God's calling of Jews then, and Jews and Gentiles now. It is not an election to salvation, but to a status of honour and influence in witnessing for him. "Send!" Then God is the great Father of all human spirits, not willing that any should perish. The Jewish Church was a city set on a hill to enlighten others; the salt to save the world from death and putrefaction.

III. THE QUICK RESPONSE. There is no hesitation. "Here am I." Men should fulfil their own prayers. They ask for grace and strength to work and give. Let them inquire within whether they cannot turn supplication into consecration. "Here am I." How few say that! They look round and exclaim, "Send others!" "Send me!" says the prophet, fulfilling the commission which makes him the great evangelic spirit of the Old Testament.—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The vision of God.* "I saw . . . the Lord," writes the prophet. These simple, strong words suggest to us—

I. THE VISION WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE. "No man hath seen God at any time," our Lord declares; and his declaration is sustained by the philosophic truth that he who is a Divine Spirit must be invisible to mortal eye. So far as our apprehension by sense is concerned, God must remain, to every human being, "the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*." Himself, in his own essential nature, we cannot look upon.

II. THE VISION WHICH IS EXTRAORDINARY. God has, on some few occasions, granted special and particular manifestations of himself—such that those to whom they were vouchsafed might say, without impropriety, that they had "seen the Lord." Of this kind were the burning bush (Exod. iii.), the vision granted to Moses on the mount (Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6), that of Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 19), this one narrated in the text, those of the Apocalypse. In these cases there was a manifestation of Deity in some form, temporarily assumed, cognizable by the senses, and bringing the soul into close communion with the Eternal One himself.

III. THE VISION WHICH IS CONSTANT. It is something more than poetry to think and speak of God as being in the various objects and operations in nature. It is something deeper than fanciful sentiment, and truer than Pantheistic thought, to say that "nature is the robe of God." For his power is immanent in all living things. The "forces of nature," which are working everywhere and in all things, are, in truth, the outworkings of his own Divine hand, in constant and regular, and therefore in measurable and reliable activity. When we watch them, we do well to feel that we are near

to him; they are directly suggestive of him, and we ought not to be able to regard them with interest without reaching and resting in him of whose presence and skill and love they continually speak to us.

IV. THE VISION WHICH IS HISTORICAL. There are two manifestations of Deity which stand by themselves, the latter being transcendently the greater and more gracious of the two. 1. One was in the visible Shechinah, which remained the constant symbol of the presence of Jehovah for many generations; there in the midst of the camp, visible to any eye that looked within the veil, but only to be seen by one man on one great day in the sacred calendar. 2. The other was found in him who was able to say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They who looked on him in the days of his flesh, and who heard his voice, might say with peculiar meaning, "I have seen the Lord." And we, before whose eyes a once-crucified Saviour has been conspicuously upheld (see Gal. iii. 1), and who, in him, have presented to our spiritual vision the holy and loving One, infinitely worthy of our reverent affection, may also say, with profound truthfulness, that we too "have seen the Lord."

V. THE VISION WHICH IS OCCASIONAL. There are certain exceptional experiences which God grants to us now, when he comes very near to us and reveals himself to our souls. It may be on the occasion of some outward incident, the apparent nearness of death and the future world, or the passing of some intimate friend or relation into the unseen realm, or the powerful presentation of the truth by some faithful minister of Christ, or it may be the sudden illumination of the Spirit of God apart from all special circumstances whatsoever; but there are times in individual history when God comes to us, when he makes his person, his claims upon us, his grace to us in his Son, and with these, our highest, eternal interests, to assume to our souls their true, their grand proportions. Then is it well, indeed, for us so to act that we can thereafter say, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."—C.

Vers. 2—4.—*A sermon from the seraphim.* Taking the seraphim of this prophetic vision as symbols of the "highest creaturely intelligences," we gather from the text—

I. THAT THE LOWLIEST REVERENCE BECOMES THE HIGHEST CREATED BEINGS. "With twain [of his wings] he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet." Of the six wings each seraph possessed, *four* were used to indicate their sense of unworthiness in the near presence of God; *two* only were in readiness for active service. May we not fairly infer that, as we go upward in the order of intelligence, we become more impressed with the majesty and greatness of the Divine, and consequently with our own littleness? Elevation in rank does not mean diminution, but increase in reverence of spirit and in homage of worship. The higher the intelligence, the deeper the sense of lowliness, and the fuller the devotion of power in the attitude and act of adoration.

II. THAT THE HEAVENLY LIFE IS LARGELY SPENT IN ACTIVE SERVICE. "With twain he did fly." The seraphim are represented as so equipped as to be ready for the most prompt and speedy service. The heavenly life may be one of sacred song and peaceful rest; but it certainly is also one of joyous, holy activity. It will be the very crown of our blessedness that, unclothed of all that hampers and impedes, and clothed upon with those celestial organs which fit for fleetest and strongest service, we shall do the King's behests with untiring wing, with unflagging energy, with unfading love and joy.

III. THAT THE CELESTIAL INTELLIGENCES HAVE A KEEN APPRECIATION OF THE DIVINE HOLINESS. "Holy, holy, holy," etc. It is significant enough that, in this ascriptive utterance, only one of the attributes of God finds a place. The repetition of the epithet marks the fulness and clearness of the thought, as also the intensity of the feeling. In Jesus Christ we rightly magnify the grace and mercy, the gentleness and considerateness, of the heavenly Father to whom we are reconciled through him; but we must see to it that we do not so dwell on the more gracious aspects of the Divine character as to lose sight of, or even dwarf his other and opposite attributes. As we draw near to the heavenly world we must take the celestial view, which is one of a deep and strong conviction of his perfect purity, of his stainless holiness, of his utter and eternal hostility to every shade and taint of sin.

IV. THAT THE HIGHEST INTELLIGENCES SEE ALL THINGS IN THEIR RELATION TO GOD. "The whole earth is full of his glory." Those who will receive no more helpful

and decisive teaching than that of science and philosophy fall short of this; they come to the irreverent conclusion that the heavens and the earth declare the glory of those only who have studied their secrets and discovered their laws. But the highest, the heavenly intelligences find God everywhere and his glory in everything. The psalm of the seraphim declares that "the whole earth is full of his glory." And we, as we ascend in mental power and spiritual worth, shall let all earthly things speak to us of God. The multitude of all created things and of all living creatures will speak of his *power;* the intricacy and delicacy and adaptation of all things will tell of his *wisdom;* the vast and measureless amount of happiness scattered over all the earth's surface and even in its depths will sing of his *beneficence;* the sorrow and the death which are beneath its skies will chant the *righteousness* of his holy rule; the upward struggle and the better life, which grow clearer and stronger age by age, will bear witness to his *regenerating goodness.* All things will speak of God, the whole earth will be full of his glory.—C.

Vers. 5—7.—*Spiritual agitation.* The passage depicts the prophet in a condition of great mental agitation; his state may suggest to us—

I. THE ALARM OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT UNDER THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. Anything which brings us into close contact with the unseen world powerfully affects our spirit and produces an apprehension for which we may not be able to account. 1. Any visitant, real or imaginary, from the spiritual realm fills us with fear (see Judg. vi. 22; xiii. 22; Job iv. 15; Dan. x. 8; Luke i. 12; ii. 9). We have not the slightest reason to apprehend any act of hostility from such a being, and may be said to have a positive interest in knowing that such as they are do exist and do concern themselves in our welfare. But there are few men who would not be considerably agitated if they believed themselves to be in the presence of a disembodied (or unembodied) spirit. 2. We are affected with lively apprehension when we think ourselves to be on the confines of the future, the spiritual world. 3. The conception of the near presence of the Lord himself awakens the greatest disquietude of soul. So was it with Isaiah now. "Woe is me! I am undone," he exclaimed. So was it with Peter when the miraculous draught revealed the presence of his Divine Master. "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord," was his prayer. And whenever we are brought into such a spiritual condition that we are ready to say, "Surely God is in this place," whenever the hand of the Lord is felt to be upon our souls and his voice to be manifestly addressing our hearts, we are awed, agitated, even alarmed, with a peculiar and inexpressible apprehension.

II. ITS JUSTIFICATION IN OUR HUMAN GUILT. We may not be able to explain our alarm at the nearness of any created being from the other world, but we can well understand how it is we are affected as we are under the consciousness of the divine presence. It is that our littleness is abashed at the presence of Divine majesty, our ignorance in presence of Divine wisdom, our feebleness in presence of Divine power. But this is not *the* explanation of our alarm. It is found in the fact that when we find ourselves before God we are conscious that a guilty soul is in the near presence of the thrice-holy One (see ver. 3). The clue to our agitation is in the words, "I am a man of *unclean* lips;" "I am a *sinful* man." There is a twofold reason why sinful men should be alarmed at the felt presence of God: *one*, that all sin by its very nature shrinks and cowers in the conscious presence of purity; *the other*, that the guilty human soul knows well that it is the province, and is in the power, of the righteous God to inflict the penalty which is its due; and it knows that the rightful penalty of sin is sorrow, shame, death.

III. ITS DIVINE REMOVAL. (Vers. 6, 7.) Under Divine direction (as we may assume) one of the cherubim took a live coal from that altar of sacrifice which God had caused to be built for the purging of the sins of the people, and with the coal he touched the "unclean lips" of which the prophet had made confession and complaint; so was his "iniquity taken away," and, we may conclude, his spirit calmed. The removal of that spiritual agitation which comes to our soul when we realize that our guilt is in the full view of the Holy One can only come from God himself. We may bless his Name that he has made such ample provision for this gracious purpose. 1. He has provided the *sacrifice and the altar;* that is found in him who is the Propitiation for our sins, in the cross of Calvary. 2. He has provided the *messengers* of mercy; these are found in

those faithful servants who carry the gospel of his grace on the wings of their ardent love. 3. He has provided the *means* by which the sacrifice and the soul are connected, and the virtue of the one is made to touch and heal the other; this is found in that living faith by which the Lamb of God takes away our sin, and our soul, "being justified by faith, has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."—C.

Ver. 8.—*On God's errand.* Our thought is naturally divided into—

I. THE DIVINE DEMAND. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" **1.** There are some demands God makes *of us all.* He requires that we should hearken when he speaks; that we should be especially attentive to his Son (Matt. xvii. 5); that we should accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, Saviour, Friend, Exemplar; that we should honour him before the world. 2. There are other demands he makes of *most of his children.* That they should actively engage in the work of extending his kingdom; that they should suffer some kind of persecution for his sake. 3. There remain some demands he only makes *of a few.* Work requiring specially hard toil, or particular preparation in study, or unusual tact and versatility, or exceptional powers of mind or body. *Then* he says, "Whom (of all my servants) shall I send; and who will go?"

II. THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE. "Here am I; send me." In order to say this wisely and rightly, there must be: 1. Thorough devotedness; half-heartedness will never succeed on such errands as these. 2. Special qualification, by native faculty or favourable antecedents. 3. Freedom from other and more pressing obligations. These conditions being fulfilled, all the highest considerations—the will of Christ, the pitiful necessities of the sons of want and sorrow and shame, the example of the noblest, the recompense of the righteous—combine to say, "Go, and the Lord be with you."—C.

Vers. 9—13.—*The shadow of sacred truth.* We may view these words in—

I. THEIR NATIONAL ASPECT. Thus regarded, they point to: 1. Painful and guilty obduracy. The prophet should speak, but the people would disregard; all that was froward and perverse in them would repel and reject the Divine message; their reception of the truth would only end in spiritual deterioration and greater moral distance than ever from deliverance (vers. 9, 10). 2. Protracted impenitence and Divine judgment (vers. 11, 12). 3. Long-lingering mercy ending in partial restoration (ver. 13). But we shall gain most from these verses by regarding them in—

II. THEIR INDIVIDUAL ASPECT. The ninth and tenth verses have the most direct and serious bearing on our condition now. They suggest to us that sacred truth not only sheds a bright light, but *casts a deep shadow* where it falls. 1. It casts the shadow of *solemn responsibility* everywhere. When a greater than Moses legislates, and a wiser than Solomon speaks to us, we have more to be responsible for than they who received the Law from Sinai, and they who lived under the reign of the son of David. From those to whom much is given will much be required. 2. It casts the shadow of a *heavy condemnation* on those who reject it. "Of how much sorer punishment," etc.! "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment," etc.; "This is the condemnation, that light is come," etc.; "He that knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes." 3. But the special lesson from our text is that it casts the shadow of *spiritual deterioration* on those who refuse it. "Make the heart of this people fat . . . shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes," etc. The apparent sense of these words cannot be, and is not, the one that should be accepted. They cannot possibly be meant to signify that God desired his prophet deliberately and intentionally to cause moral obtuseness, spiritual blindness, in order that the people of Judah might be prevented from repenting and so from being saved. Such a thought not only outrages every reverent idea of the Divine character, but flatly contradicts the most express statements of the Divine Word (see Ezek. xviii. 23; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9; Jas. i. 13). There is one sense of which the words are susceptible, and which is in accordance with the plainly revealed character of God; it is that the prophet *was to declare such truth as would actually result in spiritual blindness, and therefore in incapacity for repentance and redemption.* Now, it is the solemn duty of the minister of Christ to do the same thing continually. He knows that, as his Divine Master was "set for the fall" as well as for the "rising again of many in Israel" (Luke ii. 34), and as he had occasion to say, "For judgment am I come into this world, . . . that

they who see may be made blind" (John ix. 39), that as his gospel was in earliest times a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (ch. viii. 14; and see Matt. xxi. 44; 1 Cor. i. 23; 2 Cor. ii. 16), so now the truth of the living God must prove, to those who reject it, the occasion of moral and spiritual degeneracy. He must lay his account with this sad fact, must go forth, like Isaiah, well aware that it is a two-edged sword he wields. But let the sons of sacred privilege understand what is their peril as well as their opportunity. Deliberately rejected truth leads down to (1) a diminished sensibility, the lessening of pure religious emotion; (2) loss of spiritual apprehension, an enfeebled capacity to perceive the mind and meaning of the Divine Teacher; (3) a vanishing likelihood of personal salvation. When the ear is shut and the eye is closed, is it likely that the feet will be found in the way of life? Will they not wander off to the fields of folly, up to and over the precipice of ruin?—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*Symbolic impressions of the Divine holiness.* This is the only vision recorded in Isaiah's prophecy. It did not come at the beginning of his labours, but as an inauguration to a higher degree of the prophetic office. From the tone of the latter part of the chapter, it is evident that he had found out the rebelliousness and obstinacy of the people, and perhaps had become, like Elijah, greatly distressed and discouraged; needing, therefore, such a reviving and encouragement as this vision was fitted to afford. It introduces the prophet as outside, near the altar in front of the temple. The doors are supposed to be open, and the veil hiding the holy of holies to be withdrawn, unfolding the sight of Jehovah as a Monarch sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his ministers of state. According to the tradition, Isaiah's assertion that he had seen God was the pretext for sawing him asunder, in the reign of Manasseh. In the record of the vision it should be noticed that Isaiah gives only surroundings of God, no description of the Divine Being himself. If this had been the only vision recorded as granted by God to his people, its explanation would have been difficult. It is, however, but one of a long series, and it appears to illustrate a recognized mode of Divine dealings. God takes opportunities of impressing the Divine holiness and claims by symbolic manifestations. We review the principal illustrations from Bible records.

I. The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy Shield, and thy exceeding great Reward." And Abram, by Divine direction, took a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon, killed them, divided them, and while a horror of great darkness fell upon him, "behold! a smoking furnace and a burning lamp"—symbols of Divine holiness—"passed between the pieces, and the Lord made a covenant with Abram."

II. A vision was granted to Jacob, from which the whole tone of his life was changed, and he began a covenanted, God-fearing career. As he lay wearily on his stone pillow, under the clear-shining stars of an Eastern sky, "behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, . . . the land whereon thou liest, to thee and thy seed will I give it."

III. Moses led the flock of Jethro, one memorable day, to the back side of the desert, and "came to the mount of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And God called unto him out of the midst of the bush"—symbol of the holiness that consumes and purifies—"and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I."

IV. When commencing his arduous life-work, a similar impression was wrought upon Joshua. One day he looked towards Jericho, and lo! "there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." In answer to Joshua's question he said, "As Captain of the Lord's host have I come . . . Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy."

V. In the times of the judges Gideon and Manoah beheld angels who delivered messages, and ascended in the smoke of sacrificial fires. Samuel, when a little lad, heard the very voice of God speaking his own name, and entrusting him with prophetic messages. Solomon was honoured by God's appearing to him in a night-dream, and offering the bestowment of the best blessings upon him. Elijah, after the lightning,

and thunder, and earthquake, and wind had passed, heard God in the "still small voice." Job exclaims, as in the rapture of a vision, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself." Jeremiah was directly set apart for his prophetic work. "The Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth."

VI. In the New Testament records we find similar scenes. Manifestations of angels to shepherds. A wonderful scene of transfiguration for our Lord himself. The descending sheet, and its strange contents, for Peter. The overwhelming light and voice on the road to Damascus, and the elevation into the third heavens, to see the unspeakable, for St. Paul. And the apocalyptic vision for St. John.

Isaiah's vision is in fullest sympathy with all these. For its explanation, see the exegetical portion of the Commentary. It bore upon the prophet, through its symbols, overwhelming impressions (1) of the *holiness*, (2) of the direct *claims* of God.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Seeing God and the sense of sin.* "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." To Isaiah a work of unusual solemnity had been entrusted, one that needed to be done in a most serious and reverent spirit. He was at once the prophet of the Lord's terror and of the Lord's mercy. He was to denounce sin with the solemnity of one who knew what God's thought of sin was. He was to produce the conviction of sin before God in the corrupt minds and hearts of the people, and he was to announce the coming, presently, of the great Messenger of Divine mercy. Therefore it was necessary for him to have his own soul filled with the infinite glory and holiness of God, and filled with a very humbling sense of sin. These effects were wrought by the vision granted to him. It took its form from its design. All about it is holy. It is the holy place. The seraphim bow before the infinitely Holy. They cry, "Holy, holy." The threshold and the posts tremble before the Holy. And the soul of the prophet is abased. He is humbled in the sight of his own uncleanness, and the uncleanness of his people; for how can a man seem pure before his Maker?

I. A MAN NEEDS VISIONS OF GOD WHO HAS THE WORK OF DENOUNCING SIN. No man should dare to touch that work whose own soul is not oppressed with the evil of sin. Denunciation of sin is no flippant, easy work; it involves a tremendous expense of feeling. We talk about sin so freely, that for many of us it has lost its exceeding sinfulness. We confess it so often in familiar general terms, that it has lost almost all its terror. It may have been thus with Isaiah. He may have been so constantly talking about sin, that he had exhausted his feeling of its evil, and could even speak lightly about abomination that it is said "God hateth." Certainly we need such visions of God to fill our minds and hearts with seriousness; we well may pray, "Lord, show me thyself."

II. WHEN A MAN HAS VISIONS OF GOD, HE AT FIRST FEELS HELPLESS, AND DARES NOT UNDERTAKE GOD'S WORK. Compare the feelings of Moses and Jeremiah, after their visions. The first feeling will be, "I dare not." "Who is sufficient for these things?" But this will soon pass into humble dependence on Divine strength, and patient readiness to go where God sends, and do what God bids. When a man before God says, "Woe is me!" etc., he will soon respond to God's call, saying, "Here am I; send me."—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The true inspiration for workers.* "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." What a scene is presented in this chapter for our imaginations to reproduce! The throng of worshippers had left the courts of the sacred temple; the chanting, in alternate parts, of the choir of singers, clothed in white linen, had died into silence. Other devout Israelites were praying apart, and white-robed priests silently presented their prayers in the fragrant cloud of incense which rose from the golden altar of the holy place; "then the veil of the temple seemed to be withdrawn, and the holy of holies discovered to the prophet's eye. He saw the Lord, sitting as a King upon his throne, actually governing and judging. His train, the symbol of dignity and glory, filled the holy place, while around him hovered the attendant seraphim, spirits of purity, zeal, and love, chanting in alternate choirs the holiness of their Lord. The threshold vibrated with the sound, and the white cloud of the Divine presence, as if descending to mingle itself with the ascending incense of prayer, filled

the house. The eternal archetypes of the Hebrew symbolic worship were revealed to Isaiah; and, as the centre of them all, his eyes saw the King, the Lord of hosts, of whom the actual rulers, from David to Uzziah, had been but the temporary and subordinate viceroys. In that presence, even the spirits of the fire, which consumes all impurity while none can mix with it, cover their faces and their feet, conscious that they are not pure in God's sight, but justly chargeable with imperfection; and much more does Isaiah shrink from the aspiring thoughts he had hitherto entertained of his fitness to be the preacher of that God to his countrymen; he, a man of unclean lips, sharing the uncleanness of the people among whom he dwells. In utter self-abasement he realizes the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the separation it makes between man and the holy God" (Sir E. Strachey). This was a vision of God granted to a *worker*, a man actively engaged in God's service, and about to enter on more serious and more arduous duties. Visions have seldom, if ever, been granted to individuals merely as helps to their private religious life. They are gracious aids to *workers*; and God's willing servants can only reach adequate convictions, feel worthy impulses, or gain a suitable and inspiring impression of the dignity of their work, through some direct manifestation of God himself to their souls. No man can do great things save as he is sustained by the conviction that God has sent him to do them, and is with him in the doing. The smallness of our aims, our endeavours, and our attainments, reveal how small and how unworthy are our views of God. It is evident that we cannot yet be said to have *seen* him. He has not yet overawed us with his glory and his claims, and swelled our souls with great thoughts, great resolves, and a great consecration. Those only who have seen "the King in his beauty" can give their very noblest powers, can lay down their lives, in his service.

I. CAN THERE BE PERSONAL REVELATIONS OF GOD TO HIS WORKERS IN OUR DAY? We have sadly lost in spiritual power, in self-abnegation, and in holy enthusiasm for the glory of the Lord, because we have so easily settled this question by answering, "Certainly not. God does not now give visions. Christian workers now need not expect such. We are left now to the ordinary illuminations of the Holy Spirit." But will this answer bear looking at and thinking about, and testing by the light of actual experience? God's forms of Divine dealing do indeed differ in different ages, but the essential features of God's relationship with men do not change. He can reveal himself still to individual souls; and he is not limited to the particular forms of vision which he has used in ancient times. He may adapt his visions to the altered circumstances of each age; and if once he appeared in human form to meet the sight of bodily eyes, he may now reveal his glory in the spheres that lie open to the vision of the loving and believing soul. If he be the living God, ruling, guiding, choosing out his instruments, fashioning them for his purposes, and sending them upon his commissions, he must still have visions for his servants. They will take less of outward symbolic shape, they will relate more to thought and less to dreams; but that only makes them more immediate and direct Divine communications—contacts of the Divine Spirit with the human spirit without the intervention of any earthly symbols. God spoke to the boy Samuel with an audible voice, he spoke afterwards to the man Samuel in a spirit-voice; but both were his voice. The New Testament promise is, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

II. WHEN IN OUR LIFE MAY WE LOOK FOR SUCH DIVINE VISIONS TO WORKERS? Is there any special time or occasion at which they may be expected? They will not necessarily come at the *beginnings* of our special labours, though that might seem to be the most fitting time. They do often come at the outset, but sometimes we are permitted for a while to "go the warfare at our own charges;" we have a period of trial and of comparative failure, as Isaiah appears to have had, and then we are renewed in our consecration by some holy scenes of communion and revelation. Among the visions of the Old Testament we find several that were granted in the very midst of life's work: *e.g.* Abraham's, Moses', Joshua's, this of Isaiah; compare our Lord's transfiguration, and Paul's ascent to glory. The times for God's personal disclosures of himself to a man can never be fixed and anticipated. Like other workings of grace, they are divinely, sovereignly free; the fitting occasion for them the unsearchable Wisdom alone can decide. This only may we say—No Christian man has ever become truly great and noble and enthusiastic, no man has become utterly self-denying in the Lord's work,

until he has been called and solemnized and prepared by some soul-vision of God. He may be a Christian worker before, but he is not inspired and spiritually powerful until then. Life takes on its highest nobility only after we are able to say, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." We may not say that such visions come only *once* in a man's life. They will be given as often as there is need for them, and openness to receive them. Christ, our Lord, had visions at his baptism, at the mount, in the wilderness, and in the garden. The Apostle Paul had visions on the road to Damascus, of the man from Macedonia, of the third heaven, and amid the dangers of shipwreck. We often hear of our dying friends seeing something of which those around their beds cannot catch the faintest glimpse. And this is true of Christian souls in life. They have times of insight, times of seeing truth and seeing God; times when, apart from study and thought, they seem to be plunged in all the glory of Divine and eternal things; moments in which they could not tell whether they were "in the body or out of the body." Two or three instances may be given in illustration. While Luther was laboriously climbing up Pilate's staircase at Rome, seeking to win a righteousness out of his own works, he heard a voice thundering in his soul and saying, "The just shall live by faith." That was a New Testament vision of the truth, and from that vision Luther's power began. The following is a testimony rendered concerning a godly man: "About a year after his conversion, returning from a meeting greatly distressed with a sense of his unworthiness, he turned aside into a lonely barn to wrestle with God, and while kneeling on the threshing-floor he gained a little light. Shortly after his eyes were opened to see all clearly. He felt that he was nothing, and Christ was all in all; and from that time commenced a life of most devoted and successful labour for Christ." "The holy John Flavel, being alone in a journey on horseback, and willing to make the best improvement of the day's solitude, set himself to a close examination of the state of his soul, and then of the life to come, and the manner of its being and living in heaven. Going on his way, his thoughts began to swell, and rise higher and higher, like the waters in Ezekiel's vision, till at last they became an overflowing flood. Such was the intention of his mind, such the ravishing taste of heavenly joys, and such the full assurance of his interest therein, that he utterly lost the sight and sense of this world, and all the concerns thereof; and for some hours knew no more where he was than if he had been in a deep sleep in his bed." The following passage is taken from the margin of John Howe's study Bible. It is the only record of his personal experience preserved for us. "After I had, in my course of preaching, been largely insisting on 2 Cor. i. 12, this very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the Divine Majesty, seemed to dart into my expanded breast. I have often since, with great complacency, reflected on that very signal pledge of special Divine favour vouchsafed to me on that memorable day, and have, with repeated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights thereof. But what, on Oct. 22, 1704, of the same kind I sensibly felt, . . . far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart; tears gushing out of mine eyes, for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men, and that for this very purpose my own should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit." Dr. Bushnell says, "We have vast crowds of witnesses, rising up in every age, who testify, out of their own consciousness, to the work of the Spirit, and the new-creating power of Jesus, who, by his Spirit, is revealed in their hearts. In nothing do they consent with a more hymn-like harmony than in the testimony that their inward transformation is a Divine work—a new revelation of God, by the Spirit, in their human consciousness. So do they all testify with one voice—Paul, Clement, Origen, St. Bernard, Huss, Gerson, Luther, Fenelon, Baxter, Flavel, Doddridge, Wesley, Edwards, Brainerd, Taylor, all the innumerable host of believers that have entered into rest, whether it be the persecuted saint of the first age, driven home in his chariot of blood, or the saint who died but yesterday in the arms of his family." We do well to guard against any fanatical and superstitious watching for sensible appearances, symbolical manifestations, or the guidance of our dreams. But this we should better understand—there are delectable mountains in our Christian pilgrimage nowadays, and we may climb the heights, and get visions of the far-away celestial city. We are Christians of the plains and the

low country; we should oftener be breathing the fresh air of the mountain-side. If we would open our hearts; if we would have a well-trodden path to the place of prayer; if we would yearn for it,—God would come nearer to us, and oftener show us his glory. He is a new man, and a new worker, who can say, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Divine endowment the proof of Divine forgiveness and acceptance.* What occurred must be explained in connection with the vision. One of those seraphim who stood, with poised wings, ready for an instant and unquestioning obedience, at the bidding of the King flew down, having taken a live coal from the sublime altar which formed part of the vision, and with it touched the mouth of the prophet, speaking also words of gracious assurance. This touch of the mouth of the prophet was the symbol of the endowment of speaking power; and with it may be compared the gift of tongues made to the early Christian Church. We note—

I. THE ENDOWED ONES MUST BE THE FORGIVEN. It scarcely needed the seraph's words to carry home this assurance. Illustrate by the gift of the Holy Ghost—recognized in the possession of some special talent—to the early believers. It was the seal of their forgiveness. Compare the case of fretful and desponding Elijah. The assurance that his sin was forgiven came in the renewal of his prophetic commission.

II. THE ENDOWED ONES MUST BE THE ACCEPTED. God would not honour with a place of service for him those who were not in gracious relations with him. We may recognize that God uses *all* men, "making even the wrath of man praise him, and restraining the remainder of wrath;" but so far as his redemption work is concerned, in all its many branches, the possession of special gifts may be recognized as proof of God's acceptance and appointment. It shows that God has chosen and approves the workman. Isaiah was rightly cheered by such an endowment, or re-endowment, to prophetic work.

III. THE ENDOWED ONES RESPOND BY SELF-CONSECRATION. When the joy of forgiveness and acceptance comes, and the solemnity of a Divine trust rests on a man, if he be a good man, he can but watch for the Divine voice saying, "Whom shall I send?" and at once and heartily respond, "Here am I; send me." Compare the hesitation of Moses to take up the trust God would commit to him, and his grieving God by a hesitation that was based on a false humility; and see the words Eli put on the lips of young Samuel: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*A mission of hardening.* Dean Plumptre says, "No harder task, it may be, was ever given to man. Ardent dreams of reformation and revival, the nation renewing its strength like the eagle, were scattered to the winds; and he had to face the prospect of a fruitless labour, of feeling that he did but increase the evil against which he strove. It was the very opposite mission of that to which St. Paul was sent, 'to open men's eyes, and turn them from darkness to light'" (Acts xxvi. 18). Mr. Hutton, in one of his essays, says, "When civilization becomes corrupt, and men are living below their faith, I think it may often be in mercy that God *strikes the nations with blindness*,—that the only remedy lies in thus taking away an influence which they resist, and leaving them the stern lesson of self-dependence." This gives the key to the view we propose to take of Isaiah's mission. From one point of view a mission of hardening is a mission of judgment; but, from another point of view, it is a mission of mercy. From both points of view it is always a most trying mission for him to whom it is entrusted.

I. A MISSION OF HARDENING IS A MISSION OF JUDGMENT. Compare Moses' mission to Pharaoh. It was a fact that Pharaoh's heart *was* hardened. On natural mental laws we can explain the process of hardening. Yet we are bidden see deeper, and recognize that, in judgment on his wilfulness, "God hardened his heart." If a man resists a gracious influence once, he finds it easier to resist a second time, and gradually the influence has no persuasive effect on him; he is "hardened." Illustrate by the Pharisees, who at first inquired concerning Christ. They resisted the witness of his words and works, until at last a blindness and hardness came upon them as a judgment. The Jews are under Divine judgment now; it is a blinding, veiling, hardening, which makes it impossible for them, as a whole nation, to see the Son of God and Saviour of the

world from sin in Jesus of Nazareth. The man who *won't* see shall come into this judgment—he shall *not be able* to see. All missions, even Christ's, have a side of hardening. Some missions are almost wholly the execution of *this* Divine judgment. Blindness is God's punishment for refusing to see, and spiritual blindness comes through the very preaching of the truth that saves to unwilling hearts; and such preaching-work, that seems worse than fruitless, may be the mission given by God to some men. To us they may be ministers of judgment, even in their preaching of the gospel. J. A. Alexander says, "The thing predicted is judicial blindness, as the natural result and righteous retribution of the national depravity. This end would be promoted by the very preaching of the truth, and therefore a command to preach was in effect a command to blind and harden them."

II. A MISSION OF HARDENING IS A MISSION OF MERCY. It may be (1) considerateness for individuals, on whom it will prove the only effective agency. It may be (2) the quickest way to secure the humbling of the soul. God may have to let men get hard in their pride that, through the fall that must surely follow, their pride may be broken; just as the mother lets the child, that is conceited with its first attempts to walk, stumble and fall, in order that henceforth the walking may be less venturesome. The thought is almost beyond us, but we are permitted even to believe that God works his work of grace by calamities that we call destructive, and by hardenings that seem to us hopeless. In Isaiah's days, "events that were 'signs of the times,' calls to repentance or to action, were taken as things of course. For such a state, after a certain stage, there is but one treatment. It must run its course, and 'dree its weird,' partly as a righteous retribution, partly as the only remedial process possible." The evident results of his mission made Isaiah's ministry extremely trying and depressing; his preaching rocked some to a fatal sleep, and made others outrageous and exasperated. And the final results of his work, as at heart a work of mercy, could not be revealed for his cheering during his life. He could only hold that before him as a mysterious vision of the far away. But he was nobly faithful; a servant of God who reaped no results such as he would himself desire, but actually seemed only a mischief-maker, an increaser of existing evils, and a hardener of hearts. But to none are the words more fitting than to tried Isaiah, "Well done, good and faithful servant," executor of Divine judgment, and ministrant of Divine mercy.—R. T.

SECTION IV. PROPHECIES CONNECTED WITH THE SYRO-ISRAELITE WAR (CH. VII.—X. 4).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Vers. 1—9.—THE PROPHECY GIVEN TO AHAZ AT THE TIME OF THE SYRO-ISRAELITISH WAR. The Syro-Israelitish war is touched on both in Kings and Chronicles. In Kings the alliance between Rezin and Pekah is distinctly declared, as also the fact that they conjointly besieged Jerusalem (2 Kings xvi. 5). From Chronicles we learn that, before the siege, Ahaz was twice defeated with great loss, once by the Syrians (2 Chron. xxviii. 5), and once by the Israelites (2 Chron. xxviii. 6). He was probably, therefore, reduced to great straits at the time when Isaiah received directions to seek an interview with him, and communicate to him a comforting message from Jehovah.

Ver. 1.—**In the days of Ahaz.** The reign of Ahaz covered, probably, the space between B.C. 743 and B.C. 727. The march on Jerusalem appears to have fallen somewhat late in his reign (about B.C. 733). **Rezin the King of Syria.** Rezin is mentioned as King of Damascus by Tiglath-Pileser II. in several of his inscriptions. In one, which seems to belong to B.C. 732 or 731, he states that he defeated Rezin and slew him. **Pekah the son of Remaliah** (see 2 Kings xv. 25). Pekah had been an officer under Pekahiah, the son and successor of Menahem; but had revolted, put Pekahiah to death in his palace, and seized the crown. It is probable that he and Rezin were anxious to form a confederacy for the purpose of resisting the advance of the Assyrian power, and, distrusting Ahaz, desired to place on the throne of Judah a person on whom they could thoroughly depend (see ver. 6). It was not their design to conquer the Jewish kingdom, but only to change the sovereign. **Toward Jerusalem**; rather, *to Jerusalem*. The allies reached the city and commenced the siege

(2 Kings xvi. 5). **Could not prevail against it**; literally, *prevailed not in fighting against it.*

Ver. 2.—**It was told the house of David.** Before the actual siege began, news of the alliance reached Ahaz. It is said to have been "told the house of David," because the design was to supersede the family of David by another—apparently a Syrian—house (see note on ver. 6). **Syria is confederate with Ephraim**; literally, *rests upon Ephraim.* Under ordinary circumstances the kingdoms of Syria and Israel were hostile the one to the other (see 1 Kings xv. 20; xx. 1—3; xxii. 3—36; 2 Kings v. 2; vi. 8—24; viii. 29; x. 32; xiii. 3, 22, 25). But occasionally, under the pressure of a great danger, the relations were changed, and a temporary league was formed. The inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. show such a league to have existed in the time of Benhadad II. and Ahab ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 103, 104). The invasion of Pul, and the threatening attitude of Tiglath-Pileser II., had now once more drawn the two countries together. On the use of the word "Ephraim" to designate the kingdom of Israel, see Hosea, *passim.* **His heart was moved**; or, *shook.* If the two kings had each been able separately to inflict on him such loss (see the introductory paragraph), what must he not expect, now that both were about to attack him together? It is not clear whether Ahaz had as yet applied to Assyria for help or not.

Ver. 3.—**Thou, and Shear-Jashub thy son.** The name Shear-Jashub, "a remnant shall return," may have been given to Isaiah's son by revelation, as Ewald thinks it was; or Isaiah may have given it to testify his faith both in the threats and in the promises of which he had been made the mouth-piece. The command to take him with him on the present occasion was probably given on account of his name, that the attention of Ahaz might be called to it. **The conduit of the upper pool** is mentioned also in 2 Kings xviii. 17. It was probably a subterranean duct which brought water into the city from the high ground outside the Damascus gate. Ahaz may have visited it in order to see that it was made available for his own use, but not for the enemy's (comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4, 30; ch. xxii. 9, 11).

Ver. 4.—**Take heed, and be quiet**; or, *see that thou keep quiet*; i.e. "be not disturbed; do not resort to strange and extreme measures; in quietness and confidence should be your strength" (see ch. xxx. 15). **The two tails of these smoking firebrands.** Rezin and Pekah are called "two tails," or "two stumps of smoking firebrands," as persons who had been dangerous, but whose power of doing harm was on the point of departing from them. They could not now kindle a flame; they could only "smoke." **The son of Remaliah.** Pekah seems to be called "Remaliah's son" in contempt (comp. vers. 5, 9), Remaliah having been a man of no distinction (2 Kings xv. 25).

Ver. 6.—**Make a breach therein.** The word employed means properly "making a breach in a city wall" (2 Kings xxv. 4; 2 Chron. xxxii. 1; Jer. xxxix. 2; Ezek. xxvi. 10), but is used also in a metaphorical sense for injuring and ruining a country (see especially 2 Chron. xxi. 17). **The son of Tabeal**; or, *Tabêl.* "Tab-êl" appears to be a Syrian name, founded upon the same pattern as Tab-rimmon (1 Kings xv. 18), the one meaning "God is good," the other "Rimmon is good." We cannot, however, conclude from the name that the family of Tabeal was monotheistic (Kay), for El was one of the many Syrian gods as much as Rimmon (see Max Müller, 'Science of Religion,' pp. 177, 178).

Ver. 7.—**Thus saith the Lord God**; literally, *the Lord Jehovah*, as in ch. xxviii. 16; xl. 10; xlviii. 16, etc. **It shall not stand**; *i.e.* "the design shall not hold good, it shall not be accomplished." Rezin and Pekah have planned to set aside the issue of David, to which God had promised his throne (2 Sam. vii. 11—16; Ps. lxxxix. 27—37), and to set up a new line of kings unconnected with David. They think to frustrate the everlasting counsel of God. Such an attempt was of necessity futile.

Ver. 8.—**For the head of Syria is Damascus**, etc. Syria and Ephraim have merely human heads—the one Rezin, the other (ver. 9) Pekah; but Judah, it is implied, has a Divine Head, even Jehovah. How, then, should mere mortals think to oppose their will and their designs to God's? *Of course*, their designs must come to nought. **Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken**, etc. If this prophecy was delivered, as we have supposed, in B.C. 733 (see note on ver. 1), sixty-five years later would bring us to B.C. 669. This was the year in which Esar-haddon, having made his son, Asshur-bani-pal, King of Assyria, transferred his own residence to Babylon, and probably the year in which he sent from Babylonia and the adjacent countries a number of colonists who occupied Samaria, and entirely destroyed the nationality, which, fifty-three years earlier, had received a rude blow from Sargon (comp. Ezra iv. 2, 9, 10, with 2 Kings xvii. 6—24 and 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11). It is questioned whether, under the circumstances, the prophet can have comforted Ahaz with this distant prospect, and suggested that in the present chapter prophecies pronounced at widely distant

periods have been mixed up (Cheyne); but there is no such appearance of dislocation in ch. vii., in its present form, as necessitates any such theory; and, while it may be granted that the comfort of the promise given in ver. 8 would be slight, it cannot be said that it would be *nil;* it may, therefore, have been (as it seems to us) without impropriety added to the main promise, which is that of ver. 7. The entire clause, from "and within" to "not a people," must be regarded as parenthetic.

Ver. 9.—**If ye will not believe, etc.** Translate, *If ye will not hold this faith fast, surely ye will not stand fast.* Full faith in the promise of ver. 7 would have enabled Ahaz to dispense with all plans of earthly policy, and to "stand fast in the Lord," without calling in the aid of any "arm of flesh." Distrust of the promise would lead him to take steps which would not tend to "establish" him, but would make his position more insecure (see 2 Kings xvi. 7—18; 2 Chron. xxviii. 16, 20).

Vers. 10—16.—THE SIGN OF IMMANUEL. The supposition that there was a considerable interval between ver. 9 and ver. 10 (Cheyne) is quite gratuitous. Nothing in the text marks any such interval. God had sent Ahaz one message by his prophet (vers. 4—9). It had apparently been received in silence, at any rate without acknowledgment. The faith had seemed to be lacking which should have embraced with gladness the promise given (see the last clause of ver. 9). God, however, will give the unhappy monarch another chance. And so he sends him a second message, the offer of a sign which should make belief in the first message easier to him (ver. 11). Ahaz proudly rejects this offer (ver. 12). Then the sign of "Immanuel" is given—not to Ahaz individually, but to the whole "house of David," and through them to the entire Jewish people. "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, whose name shall be called Immanuel; and before this child shall have grown to the age of moral discernment, God's people will have been delivered, and their enemies made a desolation" (vers. 14—16). The exact bearing of the "sign" will be best discussed in the comment upon ver. 14.

Ver. 10.—The Lord spake again unto Ahaz. As before (**vers. 3, 4**) by the mouth of his prophet.

Ver. 11.—**Ask thee a sign.** Asking for a sign is right or wrong, praiseworthy or blamable, according to the spirit in which the request is made. The Pharisees in our Lord's time "asked for a sign," but would not have believed any the more had they received the sign for which they asked. Gideon asked for a sign to strengthen his faith (Judg. vi. 37, 39), and received it, and in the strength of it went forth boldly against the Midianites. When God himself proposed to give a sign, and allowed his creature to choose what the sign should be, there could be no possible wrong-doing in a ready acceptance of the offer, which should have called forth gratitude and thanks. **Ask it either in the depth, or in the height above;** *i.e.* "Ask any sign thou wilt, either in hell or in heaven"—nothing shall be refused thee.

Ver. 12.—**I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.** Ahaz, who has no wish for a sign, because he has no wish to believe in any other salvation than that which will follow from the realization of his own schemes, finds a plausible reason for declining to ask for one in those passages of the Law which forbade men to "tempt God" (Exod. xvii. 7; Deut. vi. 16). But it could not be "tempting God" to comply with a Divine invitation; rather it was tempting him to refuse compliance.

Ver. 13.—**O house of David** (comp. ver. 2). It is not Ahaz alone, but the "house of David," which is on its trial. Men are conspiring to remove it (ver. 6). If it will not be saved in God's way, it will have to be removed by God himself. **Is it a small thing for you to weary men?** *i.e.* "Are you not content with wearying *men;* with disregarding all *my* warnings and so wearying *me?* Must you go further, and weary God" (or, "wear out his patience") "by rejecting his gracious offers?" **My God.** In ver. 11 Isaiah had called Jehovah "thy God;" but as Ahaz, by rejecting God's offer, had rejected God, he speaks of him now as "my God."

Ver. 14.—**Therefore.** To show that your perversity cannot change God's designs, which will be accomplished, whether you hear or whether you forbear. **The Lord himself;** *i.e.* "the Lord himself, of his own free will, unasked." **Will give you a sign.** "Signs" were of various kinds. They might be actual miracles performed to attest a Divine commission (Exod. iv. 3—9); or judgments of God, significative of his power and justice (Exod. x. 2); or memorials of something in the past (Exod. xiii. 9, 16); or pledges of something still future. Signs of this last-mentioned kind might be miracles (Judg. vi. 36—40; 2 Kings xx. 8—11), or prophetic announcements (Exod. iii. 12; 1 Sam. ii. 34; 2 Kings xix. 29). These last would only have the effect of signs on those who witnessed their accomplishment. **Behold.** "A forewarning of a great event" (Cheyne). **A virgin shall conceive.** It is

questioned whether the word translated "virgin," viz. *'almah*, has necessarily that meaning; but it is admitted that the meaning is borne out by every other place in which the word occurs in the Old Testament (Gen. xxiv. 43; Exod. ii. 8; Ps. lxviii. 25; Prov. xxx. 19; Cant. i. 3; vi. 8). The LXX., writing two centuries before the birth of Christ, translate by παρθένος. The rendering "virgin" has the support of the best modern Hebraists, as Lowth, Gesenius, Ewald, Delitzsch, Kay. It is observed with reason that unless *'almah* is translated "virgin," there is no announcement made worthy of the grand prelude: "The Lord himself shall give you a sign—Behold!" The Hebrew, however, has not "*a* virgin," but "*the* virgin" (and so the Septuagint, ἡ παρθένος), which points to some special virgin, pre-eminent above all others. **And shall call**; better than the marginal rendering, *thou shalt call*. It was regarded as the privilege of a mother to determine her child's name (Gen. iv. 25; xvi. 11; xxix. 32—35; xxx. 6—13, 18—21, 24; xxxv. 18, etc.), although formally the father gave it (Gen. xvi. 15; 2 Sam. xii. 24; Luke i. 62, 63). **Immanuel.** Translated for us by St. Matthew (i. 23) as "God with us" (μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός). (Comp. ch. viii. 8, 10.)

Ver. 15.—**Butter and honey shall he eat.** His fare shall be of the simplest kind (comp. ver. 22). **That he may know**; rather, *till he shall know* (Rosenmüller); *i.e.* till he come to years of discretion. (The rendering of the Revisers of 1885, "when he knoweth," is less satisfactory.)

Ver. 16.—**The land**, etc. Translate, *The land shall be desolate, before whose two kings thou art afraid.* The "land" must certainly be that of the two confederate kings, Rezin and Pekah, the Syro-Ephraimitic land, or Syria and Samaria. "Desolate" may be used physically or politically. A land is "desolate" politically when it loses the last vestige of independence.

Vers. 17—25.—THE DANGER TO JUDAH FROM ASSYRIA. The perversity of Ahaz, already rebuked in ver. 13, is further punished by a threat, that upon him, and upon his people, and upon his father's house, shall come shortly a dire calamity. The very power whose aid he is himself bent on invoking shall be the scourge to chastise both king and people (vers. 17—20). The land shall be made bare as by a razor (ver. 20). Cultivation shall cease; its scant inhabitants will support themselves by keeping a few cows and sheep (ver. 21), and will nourish themselves on dairy produce, and the honey that the wild bees produce (ver. 22). Briers and thorns will come up everywhere; wild beasts will increase; cattle will browse on the hills that were once carefully cultivated to their summits (vers. 23—25).

Ver. 17.—**The Lord shall bring upon thee**, etc. The transition from promises to threatenings is abrupt, and calculated to impress any one who was to any extent impressible. But Ahaz seems not to have had "ears to hear." **From the day that Ephraim departed from Judah**; *i.e.* from the time of the revolt under Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 16—24)—an evil day, which rankled in the mind of all true Judæans. **Even the King of Assyria.** The construction is awkward, since "the King of Assyria" cannot well stand in apposition with "days." Hence many take the words for a gloss that has been accidentally intruded into the text (Lowth, Gesenius, Hitzig, Knobel, Cheyne). Others, however, see in the grammatical anomaly a grace of composition.

Ver. 18.—**The Lord shall hiss** (see ch. v. 26, and note *ad loc.*). **For the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt.** The "fly of Egypt," like the "bee of Assyria," represents the military force of the nation, which God summons to take part in the coming affliction of Judæa. The prophetic glance may be extended over the entire period of Judah's decadence, and the "flies" summoned may include those which clustered about Neco at Megiddo, and carried off Jehoahaz from Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiii. 29—34). There may be allusion also to Egyptian ravages in the reigns of Sargon, Sennacherib, and Esar-haddon. In any general review of the period we shall find it stated that, from the time of Sargon to that of Cyrus, Judæa was the battle-ground upon which the forces of Assyria (or Assyro-Babylonia) and Egypt contended for the empire of western Asia. The desolation of the land during this period was produced almost as much by the Egyptian "fly" as by the Assyrian "bee." The "rivers of Egypt" are the Nile, its branches, and perhaps the great canals by which its waters were distributed. **The bee that is in the land of Assyria.** The choice of the terms "bee" and "fly," to represent respectively the hosts of Assyria and Egypt, is not without significance. Egyptian armies were swarms, hastily levied, and very imperfectly disciplined. Assyrian were bodies of trained troops accustomed to war, and almost as well disciplined as the Romans.

Ver. 19.—**And rest**; or, *settle.* **In the desolate valleys.** Gesenius and Vance Smith translate "the precipitous valleys;" Mr. Cheyne, "the steeply walled valleys." But the cognate word used in ch. v. 6 can only mean "waste," which supports the rendering

of the Authorized Version. The exact word used does not occur elsewhere. **Upon all bushes**; rather, *upon all pastures.*

Ver. 20.—**Shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired**; rather, *with the hired razor*; i.e. the razor that Ahaz will have hired (2 Kings xvi. 8). The metaphor well expresses the stripping of the land bare by plunder and exaction (comp. Ezek. v. 1, 12, and 2 Chron. xxviii. 19—21). God would use Tiglath-Pileser as *his* instrument to distress Ahaz. **By them beyond the river**; or, *in the parts beyond the river* (comp. 1 Chron. xix. 16). "The river" is undoubtedly the Euphrates, and they who dwell beyond it the Assyrians. **By the King of Assyria.** Once more a gloss is suspected, as in ver. 17. The meaning would certainly be sufficiently plain without the clause. **The head . . . the hair of the feet . . . the beard.** These three represent all the hair on any part of the body. Judah is to be completely stripped.

Ver. 21.—**A man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep**; literally, *two ewes.* A stop having been put to cultivation, men shall return to the pastoral life, but shall not possess more than two or three head of cattle apiece, the Assyrians having swept off most of the beasts. Tiglath-Pileser, in his inscriptions, mentions his carrying off horned cattle and sheep to the amount of many thousands from the countries which he overran or conquered ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. pp. 49, 52).

Ver. 22.—**For the abundance of milk that they shall give.** The small number of the cattle will allow of each having abundant pasture. Hence they will give an abundance of milk. **He shall eat butter**; rather, *curds*—the solid food most readily obtained from milk (comp. above, ver. 15). Curdled milk and wild honey should form the simple diet of the remnant left in the land. It is, of course, possible to understand this in a spiritual sense, of simple doctrine and "gospel honey out of the flinty rock of the Law;" but there is no reason to think that the prophet intended his words in any but the most literal sense.

Ver. 23.—**A thousand vines at a thousand silverlings.** By "silverlings" our translators mean "pieces of silver," probably shekels. "A thousand vines at a thousand shekels" may mean either a thousand vines worth that amount, or a thousand vines rented at that sum annually (comp. Cant. viii. 11). The latter would point to vineyards of unusual goodness, since the shekel is *at least* eighteenpence, and the present rent of a vineyard in Palestine is at the rate of a piastre for each vine, or 2½*d.* The general meaning would seem to be that not even the best vineyards would be cultivated, but would lie **waste, and grow only "briers** and thorns."

Ver. 24.—**With arrows and with bows.** Only the hunter will go there, armed with his weapons of chase, to kill the wild animals that will haunt the thickets.

Ver. 25.—**On all hills that shall be digged**; rather, *that shall have been digged* in former times, whether for corn cultivation or for any other. **There shall not come thither the fear of briers** (so **Ewald and Kay**). But almost all other commentators translate, "Thou shalt not come thither for fear of briers," etc. The briers and thorns of the East tear the clothes and the flesh. **It shall be**; *i.e.* "each such place shall be." **For the sending forth of oxen**; rather, *for the sending in of oxen.* Men shall send their cattle into them, as alone able to penetrate the jungle without hurt.

Supplementary Note.

Ver. 14.—*Note on the general purport of the Immanuel prophecy.* Few prophecies have been the subject of so much controversy, or called forth such a variety of exegesis, as this prophecy of Immanuel. Rosenmüller gives a list of twenty-eight authors who have written dissertations upon it, and himself adds a twenty-ninth. Yet the subject is far from being exhausted. It is still asked: (1) Were the mother and son persons belonging to the time of Isaiah himself, and if so, what persons? Or, (2) Were they the Virgin Mary and her Son Jesus? Or, (3) Had the prophecy a double fulfilment, first in certain persons who lived in Isaiah's time, and secondly in Jesus and his mother?

I. The first theory is that of the Jewish commentators. Originally, they suggested that the mother was Abi, the wife of Ahaz (2 Kings xviii. 2), and the son Hezekiah, who delivered Judah from the Assyrian power (see Justin, 'Dial. cum Tryphon.,' p. 262). But this was early disproved by showing that, according to the numbers of Kings (2 Kings xvi. 2; xviii. 2), Hezekiah was at least nine years old in the first year of Ahaz, before which this prophecy could not have been delivered (ch. vii. 1). The second suggestion made identified the mother with Isaiah's wife, the "prophetess" of ch. viii. 3, and made the son a child of his, called actually Immanuel, or else his son Maher-shalal-hash-baz (ch. viii. 1) under a symbolical designation. But *ha-'almah*, "the virgin," would be a very strange title for Isaiah to have given his wife, and the rank assigned to Immanuel in ch. viii. 8 would not suit any son of Isaiah's. It remains to regard the *'almah* as "*some* young woman actually present," name, rank, and position unknown, and Immanuel as her son, also otherwise unknown (Cheyne). But the

grand exordium, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign—Behold!" and the rank of Immanuel (ch. viii. 8), are alike against this.

II. The purely Messianic theory is maintained by Rosenmüller and Dr. Kay, but without any consideration of its difficulties. The birth of Christ was an event more than seven hundred years distant. In what sense and to what persons could it be a "sign" of the coming deliverance of the land from Rezin and Pekah? And, upon the purely Messianic theory, what is the meaning of ver. 16? Syria and Samaria were, in fact, crushed within a few years of the delivery of the prophecy. Why is their desolation put off, apparently, till the coming of the Messiah, and even till he has reached a certain age? Mr. Cheyne meets these difficulties by the startling statement that Isaiah expected the advent of the Messiah to synchronize with the Assyrian invasion, and consequently thought that before Rezin and Pekah were crushed he would have reached the age of discernment. But he does not seem to see that in this case the sign was altogether disappointing and illusory. Time is an essential element of a prophecy which turns upon the word "before" (ver. 16). If this faith of Isaiah's disciples was aroused and their hopes raised by the announcement that Immanuel was just about to be born (Mr. Cheyne translates, "A virgin *is* with child"), what would be the revulsion of feeling when no Immanuel appeared?

III. May not the true account of the matter be that suggested by Bishop Lowth—that the prophecy had a double bearing and a double fulfilment? "The obvious and literal meaning of the prophecy is this," he says: "that within the time that a young woman, now a virgin, should conceive and bring forth a child, and that child should arrive at such an age as to distinguish between good and evil, that is, within a few years, the enemies of Judah should be destroyed." But the prophecy was so worded, he adds, as to have a further meaning, which was even "the original design and *principal* intention of the prophet," viz. the Messianic one. All the expressions of the prophecy do not suit both its intentions—some are selected with reference to the first, others with reference to the second fulfilment—but all suit one or the other, and some suit both. The first child may have received the name Immanuel (comp. Ittiel) from a faithful Jewish mother, who believed that God was with his people, whatever dangers threatened, and may have reached years of discretion about the time that Samaria was carried away captive. The second child is the true "Immanuel," "God with us," the king of ch. viii. 8; it is his mother who is pointed at in the expression, "*the* virgin," and on his account is the grand preamble; through him the people of God, the true Israel, is delivered from its spiritual enemies, sin and Satan—two kings who continually threaten it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The designs of the wicked, however well laid, easily brought to nought by God.* It would be difficult to find a scheme, humanly speaking, more prudent and promising than that now formed by Rezin and Pekah. They had each measured their strength against that of Ahaz singly, and had come off decided victors from the encounter. What doubt could there be of success when their arms were united? And success would be a matter of the greatest importance to them. It would enable them to form a compact alliance of three considerable warlike nations against the aggressive power which was threatening all Western Asia with subjugation. It would put an end to the perpetual little wars in which they had been for centuries wasting their strength, and weakening themselves for resistance against an alien conqueror. But God speaks the word: "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass;" and the promising scheme drops through, ends in disaster. Rezin, its framer, instead of triumphing over Ahaz, is himself attacked by Tiglath-Pileser; his territories are invaded, his capital besieged and taken, his people carried away captive, and himself slain (2 Kings xvi. 9). Pekah, Rezin's aider and abettor, is then exposed to the full brunt of Assyrian invasion, is attacked, defeated, loses cities and provinces, and, though not slain by the Assyrians, is left so weak and so disgraced, that he is shortly dethroned by a new usurper, Hoshea, who murders him for his own security (2 Kings xv. 29, 30). The "house of David," threatened with removal by the confederates, escapes the crisis unhurt, and continues to occupy the throne of Judah for another century and a half, while the kingdoms of Syria and Israel fall within a few years, and their inhabitants are deported to far-distant regions (2 Kings xvi. 9; xvii. 6; 1 Chron. xv. 26). We may learn from this—

I. THE MADNESS OF OPPOSING GOD. Syria and Ephraim were confederate against

Judah. They knew that Judah was in an especial way God's people. They designed to set aside the house of David. They knew, or at any rate Ephraim knew, that the throne belonged to the descendants of David by God's promise. Thus they set themselves against God knowingly. They thought their wisdom would be greater or their strength superior to his. But thus to think is utter madness. The "foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i. 24). In vain do "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 2—4). God had only to put it into the heart of the King of Assyria to make an immediate expedition, and all the fine schemes of the confederates, which needed time for their execution, came at once to nought, and were confounded. The would-be allies were crushed separately; their victim escaped them; and "the house of David" outlasted both their own.

II. THE WISDOM OF FULL TRUST IN GOD. When once God had sent him the message, "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass," Ahaz might have rested securely on the promise, and have been content simply to "stand still and see the salvation of God." But he can only have had a weak and imperfect trust in Isaiah's words. He must bethink himself *how* he may escape his foes; he must bring in another to help him besides God. Accordingly, he "goes to Assyria." He takes the silver and gold out of the royal palace and out of the temple treasury, and sends them to Tiglath-Pileser, with the offer of becoming his servant (2 Kings xvi. 7, 8), and he probably flatters himself that he has done well, and owes his escape from Rezin and Pekah to himself. But he has really taken a step on the downward path which will conduct the house of David and the people of Judah to ruin. He has placed himself under an idolater, and paved the way for new idolatries (2 Kings xvi. 10—16). He has helped to sweep away two states, which, while they continued, served as a breakwater to keep the waves of invasion off his own kingdom. He has called in one, who, from the true point of view, has really "distressed him, and strengthened him not" (2 Chron. xxviii. 20). How much wiser would he have been to have accepted God's promise in *full* faith, and not supplemented it by his own "inventions" (Eccles. vii. 29)! God would have found a way to help him and save him, which would have involved no such evil consequences as those which flowed from his own self-willed action.

Vers. 11—14.—*Rightful and wrongful asking for signs.* To ask for a sign is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as indicative of want of faith, and therefore as an offence to God. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt. xii. 39). "This is an evil generation; they seek a sign" (Luke xi. 29). "Jesus sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation" (Mark viii. 12). "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (1 Cor. i. 22). On the other hand, it is sometimes spoken of without any dispraise, and seems to be viewed as natural, rightful, even as a sort of proof of faith. Ahaz, in the present passage, is bidden to "ask a sign," and is blamed for refusing to do so. His refusal "wearies" God (ver. 13). The disciples ask our Lord, unrebuked, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. xxiv. 3). Hezekiah asks Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day?" (2 Kings xx. 8; comp. ch. xxxviii. 22). Can any tests be laid down whereby the right and the wrong may be distinguished in this matter? We think that some may.

I. IT IS RIGHT TO ASK FOR A SIGN. 1. When a person comes forward and claims our obedience as a Divine teacher or leader. Moses anticipated that his countrymen in Egypt would refuse to listen to him if he presented himself to them without credentials, and was given at once the power of working certain miracles as signs that he was commissioned by God (Exod. iv. 1—9). As soon as Jesus came forward to teach and to preach, he was asked, not unreasonably or improperly, "What sign showest thou?" (John ii. 18), and responded, without blaming those who asked him, by a reference to the greatest of his miracles, his resurrection. The apostles were authorized to work miracles as signs of their Divine mission. 2. When we have an invitation from God through his accredited messenger, as Ahaz had, to ask a sign. 3. When we feel that

much depends on our decision in a practical matter—*e.g.* the lives of others—we may humbly ask, as Gideon did (Judg. vi. 36—40), that God will, if he so please, give us some external indication, or else such strength of internal conviction as will assure us what his will is; only in such cases we must be careful to make our request conditional on its being acceptable to him, and we must be ready, if it be not granted, to act in the matter to the best of our ability on such light as is vouchsafed us.

II. IT IS WRONG TO ASK FOR A SIGN. 1. In a captious spirit, with an intention to cavil at it, and (if possible) not accept it. This was the condition of mind of the Pharisees, who would not have believed even had Christ come down from the cross before their eyes, as they asked him to do (Matt. xxvii. 42). 2. When we have already had abundant signs given us, and there is no reasonable ground for doubt or hesitation as to our duty. This was the case of those Jews who still "required a sign" (1 Cor. i. 22) after the Resurrection and Ascension. 3. When we ask for it merely to gratify our curiosity, as Herod Antipas just before the Crucifixion (Luke xxiii. 8). 4. When we arbitrarily fix on our own sign, and determine to regard the result, whatever it be, as a sign from heaven. This is the case of those who choose to decide a practical matter by *sortes Virgilianæ*, or *sortes Biblicæ*, or any other appeal to chance. They are not entitled to ask God for signs of this kind, or to regard such signs as significant of his will. To trust to them is not faith, but superstition.

Ver. 14.—*Jesus our Immanuel.* I. REASONS FOR BELIEVING THIS. 1. None but Jesus was ever born of a pure virgin. 2. None but Jesus was ever "God with us." 3. None but Jesus ever knew truly "to refuse the evil and choose the good."

II. DUTIES FLOWING FROM THE BELIEF. 1. If Jesus is "God with us," we must obey him. 2. If Jesus is "God with us," we must trust him. 3. If Jesus is "God with us," we must strive to imitate him. 4. If Jesus is "God with us," we must continually worship and pray to him. 5. If Jesus is "God with us," we must love him.

III. DOCTRINES INCLUDED IN THE BELIEF. 1. The Divinity of Christ, since he is "*God* with us." 2. His humanity, since he is conceived and born of a woman, and eats earthly food. 3. His love and pardoning grace, since he is "*with* us," not against us; on our side, not our adversary. 4. His atonement for our sins, since without atonement he could not pardon.

Vers. 17—20.—*Our pleasant vices whips for our own backs.* Ahaz has made up his mind to "hire" the keen razor that lies beyond the far waters of the Euphrates, in Mesopotamia and Assyria Proper. He means to meet the danger which he sees to be impending, by his own wisdom and in his own strength. His ally, Tiglath-Pileser, "the great king, the King of Assyria" (2 Kings xviii. 28), shall crush the hosts of Pekah and Rezin, save Judah and Jerusalem from harm, nay, perhaps exalt Judah to the position which was his before Israel revolted under Jeroboam. But God has decreed otherwise. He will endorse Ahaz's scheme to a certain extent; he will employ the sword of Tiglath-Pileser to destroy Rezin (2 Kings xvi. 9) and chastise Pekah ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 52); but he will then make him a scourge to chastise Ahaz himself. The razor hired by Ahaz shall shave Judæa as clean as Samaria, exhausting the land utterly, and leaving it with comparatively few inhabitants. Ahaz shall find that he is not really "helped" by his ally, but only "distressed" and injured (2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21). In all this we have a specimen of one of the ordinary modes in which God works out his will. He "hoists us with our own petard," scourges us with the whip which we have ourselves made for another purpose. Ambition brings men into places where they are fain to cry, "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Avarice indulged makes them grudge themselves the slightest enjoyment. Successful plotting deprives them of all feeling of security, putting their lives and liberties into the power of those who may at any time betray them. The attainment of the highest position at which they have ever aimed leaves them a prey to *ennui* and disappointment. Rebekah's plan for the advancement of her favourite son succeeds; but it deprives her of her son's society for a great part of her life. Absalom's rebellion against David raises him to the throne, but brings him to an untimely end within a few months. Judas carries out his scheme of betrayal with complete success, and in consequence of his success hangs himself. In

our youth we forge those fetters of habit which make us miserable in our old age. We plan, and scheme, and build castles, and laboriously achieve the accomplishment of our plans to a certain extent, with the result that we are utterly dissatisfied, and would like to pull all down and begin again. "Our mischief falls on our own head, and our wickedness on our own pate" (Ps. vii. 16). God turns our wisdom into foolishness, and crushes us beneath the structures that our own hands have erected.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The prophet comforts the king.* I. THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK. The kings and chieftains of Palestine were in dread of the great Assyrian power. Under the weak rule of Ahaz Judah had sunk very low, and the King of Damascus, with the King of Ephraim, think it a favourable opportunity to attack the little kingdom, and so strengthen themselves against the Assyrians. "Far down to the gulf of Akaba the shock of invasion was felt. Elath, the favourite seaport of Jehoshaphat and Uzziah, was made over to the Edomites" (2 Kings xvi. 6; xv. 37). Jerusalem was now threatened, and a usurper was to be placed on David's throne (ver. 6).

II. THE ALARM OF THE ROYAL FAMILY. (Ver. 2.) News is brought to the palace "Arâm encampeth in Ephraim;" the junction of the forces of Syria and Israel had taken place. A shivering fear, like the wind swaying the trees of the forest, passed over their hearts. The court went forth to inspect the fortifications and the waterworks, and came to "the end of the conduit of the upper reservoir, upon the path to the fuller's field"—a well-known spot (cf. ch. xxxvi. 2; 2 Kings xviii.).

III. THE MEETING WITH ISAIAH. At this spot the prophet, with his son, stood before them. It seems that by Divine intimation the prophet had called the boy *Shear-Jashub*, which means "Remnant-shall-be-converted," reminding us of the hope of his calling (ch. vi.). He would look upon the boy as a living pledge, not only of conjugal affection, but of Divine promise for a nobler Israel. See how he dwells upon the thought in ch. x. 20—22. Inspired by this confidence, he now addresses the king.

IV. COMFORT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED. "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, and be not faint-hearted." A calm, collected mind is a match for any danger. Agitation and fear magnify the ill; stout resolve reduces it to its true proportions. The worst is ever in our own fancy.

> "Some of your hurts you have cured,
> And the sharpest you still have survived;
> But what torments of grief you endured
> From evils which never arrived!"

The timid king sees a fiery mass of war rolling towards him; the stout heart of the prophet contemptuously defies the two kings as "two stumps of smoking firebrands." If we would comfort men, we must, like the prophet, tell them to draw upon the resources God has placed in the soul: intelligence, prudence, self-reliance, and self-help. There is no true self-trust which is not at the same time a trust in God.

IV. THE DEEPEST SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND COMFORT. What are the heads of the Syrian power and of Israel's power against Judah's Head, the Lord? Damascus and Samaria will rear their fronts in vain against Jerusalem, if Jerusalem only trust in Jehovah. (Ewald supposes that the words, "Judah's head is Jerusalem, and Jerusalem's head is Jehovah," have fallen out of the text, ver. 9.) Only have *confidence*. There is a play upon words in the original which we might *represent* in English by: "Fear not, fail not;" or, "Firm in faith is free from scathe;" or, "If ye *confide* not, *abide* ye shall not." 1. Confidence, presence of mind, is a duty in times of danger. 2. It may be gained, if we will fall back upon God as our Leader and Defence. "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear what men shall do unto me."—J.

Vers. 10—17.—*Faith triumphing over doubt.* Faith in the Eternal personified in the prophet, to whom all things desirable are to be hoped for, all things to be hoped for are possible; and distrust, the weakness of mere flesh and blood, represented in the timid Ahaz. Such is the illusion of appearances. The outwardly kingly man is the coward; the real king of men is the plain-looking prophet.

I. THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH. In the Name of Jehovah, Isaiah bids the king ask a sign from above—a sign "going deep down to hell or high into heaven." Truth should be its own evidence to every mind; intuition is better than proof. Isaiah has seen and listened to God in the depths of his own spirit, and no sign in the air above or in the earth beneath can give him more assurance than he already possesses. Would any man but listen and look, he should find the shrine, the oracle, the Shechinah, in his own heart. Within that awful volume of the heart, it may be said, lies the mystery of mysteries. Yet not to all is it given to read therein clearly; all other reading, even in dead tongues, is easier.

"Happiest they of human race
To whom our God has granted grace
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way!"

The duller eye, untrained to such visions, needs the large bold characters of the visible sign. "It comes in with its palpable meaning to aid human weakness. The prophets complained of the craving for signs, yet were compelled to comply with it. Men trust their senses more than they trust the ghostly and majestic shape of abstract truth; and the appeal to the ear, as the Roman poet said, produces but a sluggish movement in the mind compared with the appeal to the faithful eye. We must all confess ourselves weak; needing to see before we can believe, instead of believing that we may see. Yet such incidents as this may remind us that there is a Spirit to help our infirmities, and restore its poise to the mind unhinged by doubt. When Midian threatened Israel in the days of old, God's voice was heard by Gideon: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Yet the heart of the hero still quailed. "O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of?" (Judg. vi. 12, *sqq.*). Again the voice came: "Go and save Israel: have not I sent thee?" And again the diffident reply: "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor, and I am the least in my father's clan." Then the sign is asked for and granted; the fire, bursting from the rock, consumes Gideon's offering. God, in the strength of an almighty wisdom, "reasons together" with men. In our day it is equally hard to "hold on and hope hard in the subtle thing called spirit;" and we crave as urgently for signs, though not of the same kind.

II. THE EXCUSE OF MISTRUST. The king alleges that he dare not "tempt Jehovah." True, this was a deep reproach of old against Israel's temper. At Rephidim, in the wilderness, Moses stigmatized the demand of the people for water by this phrase, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. xvii. 2). There lay the canker of guilty scepticism. In a general way the same thing is seen in our time, in the impatient demand that the difficulties of the great problem of the universe shall be cleared up to our private satisfaction. Who gave us the right thus to interrogate and cross-examine him whose works, as a whole, witness to his goodness and love? God did not copy our puny schemes in this construction; nor does he manage the universe as we manage a business, an expedition, the government of a state. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God," means—You shall not weigh him in the scales of your finite intelligence, nor call upon him to execute your wishes as if they were the same as his holy will. So difficult is it to distinguish the plea of honesty and humility from that of dishonesty and disbelief, it looks as if Ahaz might be right, and Isaiah wrong; the latter too bold, the former more reverent. Scripture may be made to mean anything and everything; the right heart alone reads the right meaning for particular time, place, and person. While it is the mark of presumption to "tempt God," it is the symptom of unbelief when proffered light and help are refused.

III. THE PERSEVERANCE OF FAITH. With a rebuke of the king's spirit, charging him in effect with despising the goodness and tending to weary the patience of God, the prophet proceeds with his unasked-for message. What are we to learn from the expression, "wearying God"? All such poetical figures of Scripture have their deep meaning. To despise the riches of God's forbearance, to grieve his Spirit, to quench his Spirit,—these are ways of pointing out and stigmatizing that indifference and coldness to the true and Divine which may be a worse symptom than open hostility. We may either neglect to ask Divine guidance, we may disobey it when we have it intimated, or we may refuse its proffer. Perhaps this last state of mind is the worst. It shows

the heart to be already prepossessed and biassed. Ahaz was, in fact, under the influence of his false prophets and soothsayers. But why should he decline to hear at least what Isaiah had to say? He should have recognized that there were "two sides" in the great question at issue. Ahaz then warns us against listening to *ex parte* counsels. He who will only attend to the flattering echoes of his own wishes, is like him who trusteth in his own heart and who proves a fool. From Isaiah, again, the lesson comes back of faithful perseverance in our word and work, in spite of indifference, which threatens to blunt our edge and paralyze our energy. When a matter is on the conscience, let it come forth, "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear." We calculate consequences too much; and while few have the courage to risk danger by preaching unwelcome truth, perhaps fewer still have the faith in its worth to insist on pressing it upon reluctant ears.

IV. THE SIGN FROM JEHOVAH. 1. *It will be of mixed import.* Partly it will confirm previous expectation, and partly it will intimate what had not been expected. It proclaims a happy event which Ahaz had not looked for, but also a calamity which he might have averted had he possessed greater faith and truth. Mysteriously, our wishes or fears have some creative influence on our future. "Omens follow those who look to them," whether for good or evil.

> "Man is his own star; and the soul that can
> Render a perfect and an honest man,
> Commands all light, all influence, and all fate;
> Nothing to him falls early or too late.
> Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
> Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."
>
> (Beaumont and Fletcher.)

2. *The Immanuel.* In a "dark saying" the prophet opens his mouth. "Lo! *hâalmâh*" (the maiden, she who is no longer a girl, nor yet an old woman) "will conceive, and bear a son, and then call his name *With-us-God.*" *Time* is thus hinted at; it will be *soon*, perhaps in a year's time. Also the certainty and the joy of deliverance, as the boy's name betokens. It is the very rallying cry of Israel: "God with us." We must have a watchword in every noble cause, that shall condense its purport and sound the tocsin to every true aspiration and energy within. So the Crusaders shouted "Dieu le veut!" at the preaching of Peter the Hermit; so were English warriors heartened in the olden days by the cry of "England and St. George!" Notice how this phrase echoes and re-echoes—"*Immanuel*, God-with-us"—in ch. viii. 8, 10 (cf. ch. ix. 6). Every great man raised up from time to time among us in politics, in religion, to deliver, to lead, to counsel, is, in his way, an heroic reflection of Israel's Messiah. To prophetic faith and hope a Messiah, a Deliverer, is ever at the doors. If the Eternal lives and reigns, and fulfils himself by the agency of men, we need not fear that when the hour strikes, the hero, with all the credentials of his anointing, will appear. 3. *Speedy help.* "Jehovah shall help thee, and that *right early*," is a chronic promise. When the boy is approaching years of maturity and of judgment, his food will be curds and honey; that is, before he comes to manhood, Ephraim and Damascus will be discomfited, and a new "golden age" will have set in. No more is known about any particular youth of Isaiah's time to whom the mystic prediction could refer than is known about the illustrious boy of Virgil's prophetic Eclogue, who was to restore good King Saturn's reign (Ecl. iv.). It is a misunderstanding of the nature of prophecy when we try to fix its forecasts to place or time. A prophecy is never fulfilled as we expect. It refers to a world not bounded by our horizons, and to a history which does not fall into our time-perspective. This ideal Immanuel was destined yet to float before the pious hope of the nation for many centuries, till it was united with the real in the person of Jesus. 4. *The chastisement that must precede prosperity.* The great Assyrian conquest and the desolation it brings must come, in punishment of the unfaithfulness of the royal house, and the estrangement of the nation from Jehovah's ways. It is only after long trial in the fire and thorough regeneration that prosperity can come. It is a doubtful picture of the future, in which rays of glory strike athwart dark masses of gloom. Such is ever our outlook, whether for personal history, as for Isaiah in the preceding chapter, or for a nation, as here. Never has the hope of Christ been wanting, never the promise of his coming died out; and never proclaimed without the intimation of

woes and tribulations first to come. Christ's own forecasts of the future (see the closing chapters of Matthew) present the like half-veiled, half-revealed perspective. We must ever look out upon the coming time with confidence or with mistrust, according as our hearts are stayed, like Isaiah's, upon Jehovah, or weak, because trusting only to the arm of flesh, or to the irrational dreams of superstition, like Ahaz.—J.

Vers. 18—25.—*War-pictures.* I. INVADING HOSTS. The armies of Egypt and Assyria are compared to swarms of bees. As the bee-master calls to his winged slaves with a peculiar sound, so at the call of Jehovah the swarms of Israel's foes will come on, with swords that sting, and settle down in the low-lying pastures of the land, in the rock-clefts, the hedges of thorn, and the pastures. (For the image of the bees, compare Deut. i. 44; Ps. cxviii.) In Joel ii. we find a splendid picture of locusts as pictorial of an invading army.

II. DEVASTATION. Another striking image. The land, devoured by strangers, will be like a man clean shaven from top to toe of all his manly ornament of hair and beard. Like a keen razor will be the sweeping penal judgment of Jehovah on the holy land. The rich vineyards will disappear. No pruning nor digging will go forward. Briers and thorns, quick usurpers of the neglected corn-fields, will flourish, and the courts of the houses will be weed-grown (cf. ch. v. 6; xxxii. 13). Here and there will be seen a cow and a sheep or two, grazing as on a great common or desert. The farmer will disappear, or will return to the wild nomad life, living on the produce of his few cattle and on honey. Thorns and thistles will replace the vines, and the hunter will wander with bow and arrow where once the husbandman had been seen busy with spade or plough. The hoe will cease from its work, for, alas! with hope of fruit the "fear of thorns and thistles" has ceased; and the ox and the sheep will find free pasture everywhere. We have seen Landseer's two striking pictures, "War" and "Peace," in the National Gallery, and can feel their pathos. To look out from peace and plenty upon a perspective of smoke, bloodshed, and desolation is that to which the prophet calls the king. Yet amidst the gloom appears the figure, mystically hinted, of the young Messiah. And, indeed, it was in the midst of down-trodden Galilee, over which armies had so often tramped, that Jesus appeared, and adopted the holy and comforting mission of the Messiah as his own (Luke iv.).—J.

Ver. 9.—*No faith, no fixity.* "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Faith is older than the Law. It is, in fact, the elder principle of all Divine teachings. Believe. "For he that cometh to God must believe that he is." Moreover, it is a living principle. It is not a cold precept, but is vital with trust and confidence.

I. THE PROPHETIC REVELATION. It is very wonderful, and very distinct. See the succeeding (ver. 14): "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Well, therefore, has Isaiah been called "the evangelical prophet," seeing that we have in his words the revelation of an immaculate Messiah and a suffering Messiah.

II. THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE. That we are not "established" unless we believe is a principle, not only of particular but of universal application. We must believe in each other to have commerce established. Home itself is never secure without mutual trust, and there can be no established character in religion unless we have that faith without which it is impossible to please God, and which gives vital energy to all other graces.

III. THE ABSOLUTE CONDITION. "If ye will not believe." Here is the responsibility of the soul. And doubtless *we are* responsible for our beliefs. We are to weigh, to judge, to consider, to prove all things. "Judge, I pray you," says God in this same Book of Isaiah (ch. v. 3), "betwixt me and my vineyard." The condition must be absolute. It is *not* a threat; it is a statement of that which cannot be other than so. If I do not believe that corn will grow, I shall not plant it. If I do not believe that God is able and willing to save, I shall not be amongst those who believe to the saving of their souls. If I do not believe that spiritual aid will be given to perfect my graces, I shall not pray for it. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—9.—*The establishing power of faith.* The practical force of this prophetic

utterance is found in the final words of it: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (ver. 9). We may see in them *a declaration expressly personal.* They intimate to Ahaz that if he, the present King of Judah, does not put his faith in the minister and in the message of the Lord, his kingdom and his power will suffer loss. 1. His faith was sorely tried. "His heart was moved as the trees of the wood by the wind" when he heard that two powerful monarchs were confederate against him (vers. 1, 2). It required no little faith to accept, without reserve, the assurances of Isaiah (vers. 4—9). 2. But he had solid ground on which to build his hope. The history of his country should have made it perfectly practicable to believe that, whatever the Lord had decided upon, all the hosts of heathendom would be unable to withstand. 3. His human fears proved too strong for his religious convictions. 4. The prophet warned him that with the failure of his faith would come material loss. This minatory prediction was only too painfully fulfilled. Elath, a port on the Red Sea, was lost to the kingdom (2 Kings xvi. 6); great numbers of the people were slaughtered (2 Chron. xxviii. 6); many captives were carried away (2 Chron. xxviii. 8); Judah became tributary to Assyria (2 Kings xvi. 8, 9). "The Lord *brought Judah low* because of Ahaz" (2 Chron. xxviii. 19). He was *not* established; he was enfeebled and humiliated.

The lesson which the passage, particularly these final words, conveys to us is this, that WHEN FAITH FAILS, POWER DEPARTS; that faith is the one sustaining power which will establish us in the spiritual position to which we have attained. We look, therefore, at this *broad principle applicable to every one.* 1. As Christian men we enjoy an excellent estate. We are "kings and priests unto God;" we are made to "sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." "Now are we the sons of God," and all the joys and privileges of sonship are ours. 2. But our position is threatened by powerful adversaries. There come up against us the foes of our race—worldly allurements, fleshly indulgences, incitements to spiritual pride and unbelief, temptations to fall into selfishness or into untruthfulness, etc. 3. Only a living faith will uphold us in our integrity. We must have the faith which (1) enables us to realize the nearness of the living God; (2) makes spiritual realities and successes seem to our souls the great things they are; (3) brings near to our hearts the future world, with its judgment and its reward; (4) calls down from above, by believing prayer, Divine direction and support. Without this living faith, we may expect the enemy to overcome us; with it, we may hope to be established in our high and blest estate.—C.

Vers. 10—13.—*Sin and duty in regard to "signs."* The passage is interesting for this among other reasons, that Ahaz is charged with guilt for declining that course the resort to which became the national sin (1 Cor. i. 22), and for using words which were afterwards employed by the Saviour himself in repelling the attack of the evil one (Matt. iv. 7). We are, therefore, reminded—

I. THAT THE WORTH OR UNWORTHINESS OF AN ACTION DEPENDS LARGELY ON ITS ATTENDANT CONDITIONS. The Jews who sought a sign from Christ were rebuked by him for so doing (Matt. xii. 38, 39). Ahaz is reproved for *not* asking for one on this occasion. The circumstances of the two cases made all the difference. In the case of the Pharisees, abundant miraculous evidence had already been granted, and they demanded a work of a particular kind after their own fancy; in the case of Ahaz, he deliberately refused the special privilege which God offered him. That which is right and wise under certain circumstances may be wrong and foolish under others. Many things which are proper to youth are improper to age, and *vice versâ;* language which is devotion on the lips of the half-enlightened would be irreverence in the mouth of the children of privilege. Clearly instructed by God, the Israelites were simply obedient and courageous when they expelled the Canaanites from the country and occupied their land, but an invasion of another's territory and expulsion or slaughter of its inhabitants without such express authority from above would be a crime of the greatest magnitude; etc.

II. THAT WE DO WELL TO SHRINK HONESTLY AND EARNESTLY FROM TEMPTING GOD. *Honestly;* for an insincere profession of doing so is of no account. Ahaz probably used this as a mere pretext with which to cover his real unwillingness to have the will of God unmistakably revealed. And *earnestly;* for to tempt God is a serious sin and a calami-

tous mistake. We do tempt him when we neglect our duty as citizens of this world or as travellers to eternity, or when we deliberately run great risks, whether bodily or spiritual, unwarrantably presuming on God's interposing power or inexhaustible grace.

III. THAT WE SHOULD GRATEFULLY ACCEPT THE LOWER AS WELL AS THE HIGHER INFLUENCES WHICH GOD OFFERS US. A sign such as Jehovah offered Ahaz was a privilege of a lower order than the exhortation of his servant Isaiah. A miracle which appeals to the senses and the imagination is not so high and pure an influence as a sacred truth which appeals to the conscience and the reason. Yet it had its own value, and was not to be disregarded or declined. We should fear God, should exercise faith in Jesus Christ, should serve our race, first and most because it is our sacred duty so to do; but we may well be animated and impelled by other and less lofty considerations—by the fear of offending God, by the hope of gaining his favour and his reward, by a desire to win the gratitude of those we serve, by a wish to please those to whom we are related. The superfine purity which will not be moved by any but the very highest considerations does not suit our human nature, and is not sanctioned in the Divine Word.

IV. THAT THE PATIENCE OF A LONG-SUFFERING GOD MAY BE OUTWORN BY OUR PERVERSITY. "Will ye weary my God also?" (ver. 13). Much is said in Scripture of the patience of God. He is "slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Ps. cxlv. 8). We read of "the riches of his forbearance and long-suffering" (Rom. ii. 4). And they who are honestly trying to please and serve him may count on his considerateness, though their efforts be imperfect and their mistakes be many. But they who pertinaciously refuse his yoke, and stubbornly go on their own way when he is calling them to walk in his paths, may find that it is only too possible to "weary him also," and to bring down irreparable evil on their souls.—C.

Ver. 14.—*The presence of God.* We naturally ask the question—In what ways is God our "Immanuel;" in what respect is he one of whom we can say that he is "God with us;" how and where is his presence to be found and to be felt? There are many answers to this question; there is—

I. THE ANSWER OF SACRED POETRY. That the presence of God is seen in *the results of his Divine handiwork*, in the foundations and pillars of the earth, in the "meanest flower that blows," in the varied forms of life; that it only needs a true imagination to see him in all the objects and scenes of his creative power; that "every bush's afire with God, but only he who sees takes off his shoes."

II. THE ANSWER OF PHILOSOPHY. That his presence is in *all-surrounding nature, in which he is immanent;* that though all nature does not include Deity, the Divine power is present in all things, sustaining, energizing, renewing; the "laws of nature" are the regular activities of God.

III. THE ANSWER OF NATURAL RELIGION. That he is with us in his omnipresent and observant Spirit; that he fills immensity with his presence, being everywhere and observing everything, and taking notice of every human soul; that the Infinite One is he who cannot be absent from any sphere or be ignorant of any action.

IV. THE ANSWER OF THE EARLIER REVELATION. That his presence is in his overruling providence; that God is with us, not only "besetting us behind and before," not only "understanding our thought afar off," but also "laying his hand upon us," directing our course, ordering our steps (Ps. xxxvii. 23), making plain our path before our face, causing all things to work together for our good, defending us in danger, delivering us from trouble, establishing us in life and strength and joy (see Gen. xxxix. 2; 1 Sam. iii. 19; xviii. 12; 2 Kings xviii. 7; Matt. xxviii. 20).

V. THE ANSWER OF THE LATER REVELATION. That his presence was in *his Divine Son.* The time came when the words of the text proved to have indeed "a springing and germinant fulfilment;" for a virgin did conceive, and bring forth a Son, and he was the "Immanuel" of the human race, God with us—that One who dwelt amongst us, and could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They who walked with him and watched his life, and who understood and appreciated him, recognized the spirit, the character, the life, of God himself. In his mind were the *thoughts*, in his words the *truth*, in his deeds the *principles*, in his death the *love*, in his mission the

purpose, of God. When "Jesus was here among men," God was with us as never before, as never since.

VI. THE ANSWER OF OUR OWN CONSCIOUSNESS. That his presence is in and through *his Holy Spirit*. God is *with* us because *in* us; present, therefore, in the deepest, truest, most potent, and influential of all ways and forms; in us, enlightening our minds, subduing our wills, enlarging our hearts, uplifting our souls, strengthening and sanctifying our spiritual nature. Then, indeed, is he nearest to us when he comes unto us and makes his abode with us, and thus "dwells in us and we in him." Our duty, which is our privilege, is (1) to realize, increasingly, the nearness of the living God; (2) to rejoice, practically, in the coming of God to man in the presence of the virgin-born Immanuel; (3) to gain, by believing prayer, the presence of the Divine Spirit in the sanctuary of our own soul.—C.

Vers. 17—25.—*Divine retribution.* The reference of these verses is clearly national; nevertheless they may be pointed so as to bear upon individual men; for we may be sure that it is on the same principles on which God governs communities that he rules the heart and life of each one of his subjects. We gather concerning Divine retribution—

I. THAT IT MAY BE WROUGHT BY VARIOUS INSTRUMENTALITIES. 1. Sometimes by *unconscious instruments.* (1) It may be, as here, by men acting blindly. Egypt and Assyria would be wholly unaware that they were employed by God to do his punitive work. It often happens that men suppose themselves to be simply seeking their own ends when they are really fulfilling the purpose of the Most High. (2) Or it more frequently is by the regular action of physical or social laws. 2. Sometimes by *conscious agents.* As when the parent utters his strong displeasure in the Name of the heavenly Father, or the Church passes its sentence of reproach or exclusion in the Name of the Divine Master.

II. THAT IT MAY TAKE ONE OR MORE OF VARIOUS FORMS. Retribution may assume the form of: 1. *Diminution.* (Vers. 21—23.) All diminution is not directly caused by sin, but sin always tends to despoil and to diminish. The result of doing wrong is to come down from the higher estate to the lower, from power to feebleness, from eminence to obscurity, from influence to nothingness. 2. *Dishonour.* "It shall also consume the beard" (ver. 20). When men have long persisted in folly and in transgression they become the mark of general dishonour. From qualified respect down, through all stages of ill opinion, to absolute aversion and contempt, does sin conduct its victims. Sin may start in lofty defiance, but it ends in lowest shame. 3. *Degradation.* (Vers. 24, 25.) The country that was once cultivated by the hand of skilful diligence is left to yield the wretched and useless crop of "briers and thorns." The mind that once produced noble thoughts now yields guilty imaginations; the heart that was once full of holy love is now crowded with unworthy passions; the spirit that once soared heavenward with lofty hopes now circles round ignoble aims and ambitions that are of earth and sense; the life which once brought forth all honourable and admirable activities has nothing to offer now but selfish schemes or even deeds of darkness.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*National calamity with God and without God.* The historical circumstances connected with this and the following two chapters throw light on the object and meaning of the prophecy. At the close of Jotham's reign, both the neighbouring nations of Israel and of Syria invaded the country of Judah, wasting and desolating it. Now, in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, they agreed to unite their forces, and so they hoped to take even the chief city, dethrone the reigning king, and partition the land between them. News of this confederacy reached Ahaz, and produced the utmost consternation and bewilderment both in him and in the people of Jerusalem. Hurried efforts were made to fortify the city, and especially to secure the water-stores, on which their ability to stand a siege so directly depended. Plans were also formed to secure the help of the King of Assyria, though the price of such help would too surely be the loss of national independence, and the payment of tribute to Assyria. In those degenerate days few people even thought of seeking help from Jehovah, the mighty God of their fathers. While busy, inspecting the waterworks, and probably

filled with new anxiety on finding them neglected and out of repair, Ahaz sees the prophet of Jehovah approach. Isaiah's message is full of mercy and encouragement. He would quiet the unreasoning and unreasonable fears of the king; he speaks slightingly of Rezin and Pekah, as only two tails of smoking firebrands, whose strength is almost spent; they can only smoke, not blaze, and their kingdoms are hasting to decay. He bids the king not to think for a moment of leaning on Assyria, but to trust in the living God. He graciously offers, in God's Name, a sign for the confirming of his faith, bidding Ahaz even choose such a one as he felt would convince him. The king stubbornly refuses; and then Isaiah gives one, after sternly rebuking the false humility of the king. The sign is a figurative and poetical assurance that, within some three or four years, the power of his present enemies would be utterly broken. And then mercy passes into judgment, and the prophet sternly reveals the consequences that will follow any leaning upon Assyria. In the text we have a state of public affairs that might well cause alarm, and we dwell on the spirit in which times of national peril may and should be met.

I. NATIONAL CALAMITY WITHOUT THOUGHT OF GOD THE OVERRULER. Just this we have in the historical connection of the text. Viewed politically, there were grave and perilous complications. Assyria was pushing its way towards the Mediterranean. Syria and Israel were in its way. Instead of resisting their more serious Eastern foe, they confederated to injure the small country of Judah, which blocked their way southwards towards Egypt. Rezin had seized Elath, Judah's great commercial port on the Red Sea, and Pekah had overrun the territory of Judah. There was a general panic. King and people alike asked—How could they resist this combination of the neighbouring countries against them? A great fear possessed the king, and drove him to the most impolitic action he could possibly take. Having no sense of reliance on God, consciously severed by his wilfulness from God, he sought alliance with Assyria, and brought ruin on himself and his neighbour-foes. The figure of the trees waving to and fro confusedly in the wind, is expressive of the man who is not stayed on God, but left to the uncertainties of a judgment based only on circumstances.

II. NATIONAL CALAMITY WITH THE THOUGHT OF GOD THE OVERRULER. This is the contrast suggested in the passage. If Ahaz had been a God-fearing man, how differently he would have looked on these circumstances! If he had been a David, or a Jehoshaphat, or a Hezekiah, a man with the fear of God before his eyes, he would have met the perilous conditions with calmness, and seen in them an occasion for (1) special prayer; (2) renewed dependence; (3) and the testing of the sincerity of his trust; (4) also a call to watching for the Divine will; (5) and the requirement to set himself in an attitude of obedience, ready at once, and heartily, to follow the Divine lead. Apply to modern complexities of party politics and international complications, as well as to times of national calamity, by disease, or by depressed trade. Show what a vantage-ground he occupies who believes in God as the God of nations, looks for his providential rulings and overrulings, and knows that he "makes the wrath of man praise him, and restrains the remainder of that wrath." Show how quiet a nation may be when it knows that national polity is directed in the fear of him who must be called the "God of the whole earth."—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Man proposes, God disposes.* Recalling the scheme at which Rezin and Pekah had been so busy, arranging everything so cleverly, and making so sure of a speedy and triumphant success, Jehovah, sovereign Ruler and Judge, looks from above upon it all, and says of it, "It shall not stand, neither shall it be." "The plan shall not even take practical shape, much less would it achieve a permanent success." "They should neither of them, Syria nor Israel, enlarge their dominions nor push their conquests any further; they shall be made to know their own; their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them" (Matthew Henry).

I. THE LIMITS OF MAN'S FREEDOM. He is (1) free to think; (2) free to judge; (3) free to plan. There is a sense in which man has dominion over the world in which he is set, and over the circumstances in which he is placed. God, in a sense, put man, separate from himself, in the garden of this world, and stands aloof to see what he will do. Man has the trust of (1) intelligence, so that he may estimate things and the relations of things; (2) free-will, so that he may choose his course of action. But it is limited

intelligence—limited (*a*) by brain-capacity; (*b*) educational opportunity; (*c*) conditions of health; (*d*) surrounding prejudices; (*e*) measures and degrees of Divine revelation. And it is carefully circumscribed *free-will*—graciously limited because man's decisions are constantly made upon (*a*) imperfect knowledge, and (*b*) upon impulses of biassed feeling. The will of man is also limited by the condition of its accordance with the supreme will of God. Man can plan, purpose, and propose; but there he must stop until he can gain Divine permission to carry out his plans. If he dares to force his plans into action against God, he will surely find that he does but run "upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler." Who hath ever resisted God and prospered?

II. THE ILLIMITABLE CHARACTER OF GOD'S CONTROL. There is the firmest and most peremptory tone in this declaration, "It shall not stand." Affirming his authority over all nations, the Lord of hosts says, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (ch. xix. 25). God controls (1) the minds that plan; (2) the bodies that execute; (3) the spheres and circumstances in which the plan is to be worked. Watching everything, God has the arresting hand, and can say, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no further."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The faith-condition.* "If ye have no faith, verily ye shall not have continuance" (Cheyne's translation). "If ye hold not fast, verily ye shall not stand fast." See the expression illustrated in Jehoshaphat, when going out to meet the army of the Moabites and Ammonites (2 Chron. xx. 20). Habakkuk gives the same sentiment in his familiar expression, "The just shall live by his faith." Faith in him and in his Word is the one universal condition that God demands, and righteously demands, in view (1) of what he is; (2) of what he is in relation to us; and (3) of what he has already done for his people, in the experience of which *we* have shared. God's law for creatures dependent on him is, "Trust me." God's grace for his creatures is, "Response to trust." He unfolds his best blessings to those who can both trust and hope in him. The demand for faith, as the condition of receiving Divine blessings, may be traced in the Divine dealings with men through all the ages and dispensations.

I. GOD REQUIRED FAITH IN THE PATRIARCHS. Enoch was translated as a response to a life of faith; Noah was saved from the flood because he believed; Abraham's faith was "counted for righteousness." They all "died in faith." The glory on their lives is the shining of God's acceptance given to men of faith.

II. GOD REQUIRED FAITH IN THE ISRAELITES. For forty years he was teaching them the trust-lesson. And if the Divine reproaches and reprovals and chastisements could be gathered up into a sentence, they would read thus: "You will not trust me wholly." "The Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people despise me? and how long will they *not believe*, for all the signs which I have showed among them?" (Numb. xiv. 11). Those Israelites "could not enter in because of their unbelief" (Heb. iii. 19).

III. GOD REQUIRED FAITH IN THE TIME OF THE KINGS. This was the one demand made in God's Name by the prophets; and striking illustrative incidents may be found in the mission of Elijah, and in the reigns of Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah.

IV. GOD REQUIRED FAITH WHEN SPEAKING TO MEN THROUGH CHRIST. Illustrate (1) his effort to secure faith in sufferers before he healed them; and (2) his reproaches of his disciples, again and again saying to them, "O ye of little faith!" "How is it that ye have no faith?" Impress that this is God's necessary condition still, and for us. Whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of Christ, and inefficiency to good works, and the life of righteousness? The answer is—We have not "faith, even as a grain of mustard seed."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*True and false humility.* We are to understand that Ahaz had already made up his mind to resort to Assyria for help; probably he had even already sent his ambassadors to Tiglath-Pileser, and he would not be deterred from his purpose by any promise or threatening of Jehovah's. But he dissembled, and tried to get out of his difficulty by hypocritically pretending that he was deterred from asking a sign by a religious fear of tempting the Lord. His words sound as if he were humble and reverent; his heart was strong in its self-willed purposes. He says, "Neither will I tempt the Lord," as if it could be a tempting of God to do that which God directed and invited him to do. Remember that, in such passages as this, the word "tempt"

means, "Put God to the test, as if you doubted him." Dr. Kay, in 'Speaker's Commentary,' says, "In his estrangement of heart Ahaz had come to look on God as his enemy, as a dangerous person who was thwarting him in his most cherished plans, and from whom, therefore, it were best to stand entirely aloof. If he should ask a sign and it were to be granted him, would he not be bound by his own act and deed to confess the greatness of his past sins, to give up his politic plans for the future, to submit to the bonds and fetters of the old cycle of religious teaching from which he had shaken himself free?" Can we find some searching test by which true humility can be distinguished from false? (It is assumed that humility is explained and enforced as the proper attitude for man to take, and spirit for man to cherish, in the presence of God.)

I. TRUE HUMILITY SUBMITS AND OBEYS. If Ahaz had been truly humble, he would have responded at once to the Divine invitation. Illustrate from Moses shrinking from obedience to the commands which God gave him. True humility will always say, "If God has called me to do anything, I must do it; I can do it, and I may be quite sure his grace will be with me for the doing." True humility is bold unto obedience.

II. FALSE HUMILITY SUBMITS, BUT DOES NOT OBEY. This is precisely the attitude of Ahaz. He submits; he takes the humble posture; he speaks the humble words; but he does not obey. His humility is but hypocrisy. Bishop Hall says, "Art imitates nature, and the nearer it comes to nature in its effects, it is the more excellent. Grace is the new nature of a Christian, and hypocrisy that art that counterfeits it; and the more exquisite it is in imitation it is the more plausible to men, but the more abominable to God. It may frame a spiritual man in image so to the life that not only others, but even the hypocrite himself, may admire it, and, favouring his own artifice, may be deceived so far as to say and to think it lives, and fall in love with it; but he is no less abhorred by the Searcher of hearts than pleasing to himself." And Matthew Henry says, "A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those who are resolved that they will not trust God yet pretend that they will not tempt him." It may be impressed that the truly humble man is more jealous of God's honour than of his own, and therefore promptly submits and obeys; but the man who is not really humble is anxious about his own honour, and only makes a show of being jealous of God's. Ahaz needed this counsel, and so do we: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." And the greatest test of this great grace is—Does it lead its possessor to follow and obey?—R. T.

Vers. 14—16.—*The nature of the Messianic prophecies.* This being the first in the Book of Isaiah recognized as Messianic, the general subject may be illustrated in connection with it. Isaiah here gives a sign. Looking upon some woman in the king's presence who at the time was a virgin, he, in effect, says, "You shall know that Jehovah is the living God, and the all-sufficient Helper of his people, by this.—Before this woman can bear a son, and that son grow old enough to know good from evil, your land shall be delivered, and your enemies overthrown." Many Christian interpreters see in this a direct reference to Messiah, as the Virgin's Son; a reference which makes them quite indifferent to the connection of the passage with events then transpiring. There are some cases in which we must admit that the prediction almost wholly concerns the Messiah. It is nearly impossible to exhaust ch. liii., for instance, by any local and historical references. But in most cases we shall find that the Messianic meaning of the passage is its second reference, its inner and less evident teaching. The words immediately relate to some existing condition or national prospects, and through these they have to reveal the higher truth. We ought not to be surprised at this; we should rather expect it, as in perfect harmony with the idea of revelation to the Jews. Their history was a series of deliverances and redemptions; a succession of types of the coming spiritual redemption. Their religion was a set of complicated signs, all more or less keeping up the expectation of him who was to come. What, then, could be more natural and proper than that the prophecies should do, what the history and the religion had before done—bear within their external form a deeper meaning, and help to lift the soul of the nation on towards its great glory, the coming, as a member of the Isaiah race, of the long-promised "Seed of the woman"

who should "bruise the serpent's head"? The general fact that many of the prophecies do refer to the life and times of Christ cannot reasonably be doubted; but difficulties will be found in the treatment of each particular case. The language must be carefully weighed, the figures skilfully considered, and the connections adequately explained, ere any decision can be arrived at. We illustrate the difficulties by considering the very perplexing passage now before us.

I. The prophet gives a sign by renewing the promise of deliverance, and connecting it with the birth of a child, whose significant name is made a symbol of the Divine interposition, and his growth a measure of the subsequent events. Instead of saying that God would be present to deliver them, he says that the child shall be called 'Immanuel,' God with us. Instead of mentioning a term of years, he says, 'Before the child is able to distinguish between good and evil.' Instead of saying that until that time the land shall lie waste, he represents the child as eating curds and honey, spontaneous products, here put in opposition to the fruits of civilization. In a figurative manner, and using the large vague figures and metaphors characteristic of prophetic writing, Isaiah asserts that within some three or four years their deliverance would be effected.

II. But the question which is found so difficult to answer is this—Of what child does the prophet here speak? One class of writers suggest a child born in the ordinary course of nature, and in Isaiah's days. Some say it was Hezekiah; others a younger son of Ahaz, by a second marriage; others refer the passage to the birth of the prophet's own son, by a person then present, who is afterwards called "the prophetess." Another class of writers affirm that intentional reference is made to two distinct children, and two births—that of Christ, as Immanuel, and that of Shear-Jashub, the son of Isaiah; and so a double meaning was given to the passage. Yet another class of writers refer these three verses directly and exclusively to the Messiah. One of this class says, "The passage describes the actual desolations of the early period of Christ's life." Another skilfully paraphrases one of the sentences thus: "Before the Messiah, *if he were born now*, could know to distinguish between good and evil." And one suggests that Isaiah had a prophet's vision of the birth of Messiah, and so spoke of it as though taking place then.

III. The conclusion of a sober and careful examination of this, and other so-called Messianic prophecies, will probably be that the sign or the figure always relates, more or less distinctly, to passing events and passing interests; but that no local associations can exhaust their meaning and mission. The spiritually minded will always discern more in the Bible than appears to those who treat it only as a common book. The Spirit, who is given to us, "searcheth all things," even the deep things of God, the hidden references of his revelation.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*The Immanuel-Child.* It is one of the most important facts concerning the manifestation of Christ, that he was "born of a virgin," or, as the "Te Deum" expresses it, "He did not abhor the Virgin's womb." We dwell on two points.

I. In the Virgin's Child lies hid the mystery of the Incarnation. Isaiah could have had but faint and shadowy glimpses of those deeper meanings which we can find in his words. Reading his prophecy in the light of its fulfilment in the wonderful beginnings of Christianity, we can tell of a virgin unto whom the angel of the Lord came, saying, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." That was the announcement of the coming of the one only true virgin's Child. It is surely a surprising thing that we make so much of the great events of Christ's life, and dwell with so much interest upon the circumstances of his death, and yet pay such comparatively slight attention to the original mystery, the wonder of his coming to earth at all, the marvel of the woman-born God. The Incarnation is the mystery of mysteries, and he who has received right impressions concerning it will find no further mysteries in our Redeemer's life or death over which he will need to stumble. Men say—Can there be such things as miracles? Is there not an antecedent improbability that the order of nature, as we know it, should ever be changed? To receive the record of Christ's birth of a virgin-mother is to settle the whole question of the miraculous. The Incarnation is put before us at the very beginning of the gospel

history; it is the vestibule of the temple of the Christ. He who can venture past that entrance-hall will find no grander mystery in any of the courts or holy places. That Incarnation is so distinct from the ordinary working of human laws, so manifestly the operation, in the human sphere, of higher and Divine laws, that he who can receive Christ as the Child of the virgin-mother and the Divine Father, will find no miracle wrought during our Lord's life raise any disturbing doubts. The idea of incarnation is not, indeed, peculiar to Christianity. It is found in other religions, especially in those of India and China. But the contrast they present is most significant. In other religions the incarnation is transient; it is more like the angelophanies of the Old Testament times, than like the living Man, Christ Jesus, of the New Testament. Theirs is only into the appearance of a man; this is into the reality of human flesh. Theirs is usually into some monstrous form of man or beast; this is into the simple but perfect form of a true manhood. Our faith is asked for the incarnate God. Born in accordance with human times; coming into the world as every member of the race must come; nourished for months with a mother's own life. At once Man and God: born of the earth, earthy; born of heaven, heavenly and Divine. Deity in the dress of the human flesh; the Creator become a creature; the Lord of heaven and earth in the form of a servant. Infinity pressed into the hour of a mortal life. Immortality submitting to die. A babe, yet a King. An infant, yet a God. He who was from everlasting consenting to begin in time. That being the awful mystery of the Christ, it is no longer strange that he should heal diseases, feed multitudes, still the raging seas, and waken the slumbering dead; all difficulties begin to fade before us when we can say, "This was the Son of God."

II. IN THE NAME, IMMANUEL, LIES HID THE MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION. If God is *with his creatures*, it can only be to bless and save them, to deliver them from evil, to bring them into full unity with himself, to establish them in all good. If God, who is *love*, is *with* his sinful, rebellious, self-willed children, it can only be that he may deliver them from the consequences of their transgressions, and recover them from the degradation of their sinfulness. There is light and hope for humanity in this great name; the name by which prophecy pointed to him who should come; the name by which he was called when he came; the name which fits in with Jesus. The full name is *Immanuel-Jehoshua*—"God with us, saving us from our sins."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The culture of conscience.* "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Some take this expression as referring to pleasant or unpleasant food; but it probably is used in a general moral sense. Compare the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in Gen. ii. 9; iii. 5. For the expression as used in reference to children, see Deut. i. 39. Isaiah evidently intends, by a figure of speech, to indicate two or three years, the time when a child may be regarded as getting out of his infancy of ignorance and innocence. Without discussing philosophically the nature of conscience, or the sense in which man has innate ideas, and keeping quite within the sphere of observation and experience in family life, we may say, with Reid, "Conscience, like all other powers, comes to maturity by insensible degrees, and may be more aided in its strength and vigour by proper culture." The following line of thought is given barely and suggestively, because its detailed treatment must depend on the philosophical and theological standpoint of the preacher.

I. WE BEGIN LIFE WITH DESIRES. As soon as Eve was made she looked longingly on the beautiful fruits of the garden. The infants are crying *for* something, if it be only the light. Man *wants*. He is not sufficient to himself. And the wants are ever growing.

II. WE FIND THE SUPPLY OF SOME DESIRES BRINGS PLEASURE, and of some brings pain. So we begin to distinguish things by their attendant consequences in our feeling.

III. WE CALL THE PAINFUL EVIL, AND THE PLEASANT GOOD; and so establish for ourselves a standard which will test more than we at first imagine.

IV. PRESENTLY WE FIND THAT WE CONFUSE THINGS, AND CALL THINGS PLEASANT WHOSE CONSEQUENCES ARE EVIL. So we discover that our discernment needs educating; and—

V. WE ARE BROUGHT TO SEEK A STANDARD BY WHICH TO JUDGE THINGS; that is away from, and beyond ourselves; and we learn to find the only sure educating force in the

revealed will of God. Man knows with certainty what is evil and what is good, when he recognizes that God has set him in this world of sensible relations, and, pointing to some things, has said, "Thou mayest;" and to other things, "Thou shalt not." Conscience is truly cultured only when it clearly witnesses to that of which God has, in his revelation, expressed his approval.—R. T.

Vers. 18—25.—*National judgment for national sins.* In this latter part of the chapter we have one of those highly elaborate, intense, and suggestive pictures which are peculiar to the books of the prophets. The mighty Assyrian army sweeps over the land; the people flee before them; they fill every corner; they eat up all the food; they carry away all the flocks and herds; a man can barely save one cow and two sheep; they consume the fruits; they trample down the shrubs; they bear off the people captive; they leave behind them a wilderness; there is nobody to rent or till the land; the few scattered inhabitants are content to live on the spontaneous products, milk and curds and honey; agriculture is entirely stopped, and the wild beasts are again encroaching on the arable and pasture lands. William Jay, of Bath, was accustomed to say, "God can punish individuals in this life, and in the next; but he can only punish nations, as such, in this life." This may be further illustrated by reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, which was a direct national judgment on their sins as a nation, culminating in the judicial murder of their Messiah. The shout had risen, "His blood be on us, and on our children;" and so it was. We suggest the following points for consecutive illustration:—

I. Some sins are distinctively national. Such as the high-handed dealings of modern nations with semi-civilized peoples.

II. Some judgments are distinctly national. Such as Isaiah refers to: loss of statesmen; or of male population; war, etc.

III. These are directly related, the one to the other, as are sowing and reaping.

IV. They are thus fitted together, as outward and evident illustrations of the relations between sin and punishment, for the individual.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Vers. 1—4.—THE SIGN OF MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ. The sign of Immanuel was recondite. In its more spiritual sense it appealed to faith in an event far distant. Even in its literal import, it was not calculated to cheer and encourage more than a few, since neither the maiden nor the child was pointed out with any distinctness. A fresh sign was therefore given by God's goodness to reassure the mass of the people—a sign about which there was nothing obscure or difficult. Isaiah himself should have a son born to him almost immediately, to whom he should give a name indicating the rapid approach of the spoiler, and before this child should be able to utter the first words which childhood ordinarily pronounces, "Father," "Mother," Damascus and Samaria should be despoiled.

Ver. 1.—**Take thee a great roll**; rather, *a large tablet.* The word is the same as that used for "mirror" in ch. iii. 23. **Write in it with a man's pen**; *i.e.* "write upon it with the pen used by ordinary men"—in opposition to the implements of an engraver. The tablet was probably to be hung up to view in a public place (comp. ch. xxx. 8), so that all might read, and the writing was therefore to be such as was in ordinary use. **Concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.** These were the words which were to be written on the tablet, which was to be otherwise left blank. They would naturally excite curiosity, like the strange names placarded in modern streets. The name is literally, "Plunder speeds, spoil hastens." It has been imitated by Goethe in his "Habebald-Eilebeute" ('Faust,' act iv. sc. 3).

Ver. 2.—**And I took unto me**; rather, *and I will have taken for me.* It is still God who is speaking. **Uriah the priest.** Probably the high priest of the time, mentioned in 2 Kings xvi. 10—16, as the ready tool of Ahaz at a later date. Though a bad man, he may have been a trustworthy witness to a fact. **Zechariah.** Perhaps the father of Abi or Abijah, Ahaz's queen (2 Kings xviii. 2; 2 Chron. xxix. 1). It would serve to call public attention still more to the tablet, if it bore the names of two such eminent persons as witnesses.

Ver. 3.—**The prophetess.** It is not necessary to suppose that the wife of Isaiah must have uttered prophecies because she is called "the prophetess." Titles were given in the East to the wives, daughters, etc., of officials, which merely reflected the dignity of their husbands, fathers, etc. Even Miriam seems to be called a "prophetess" (Exod. xv. 20) from her close relationship to Moses, rather than from any supernatural power that she had. In the Mishna, a priest's wife or daughter is called "priestess" (Cheyne). **Call his name.** There is no reason for doubting that the name was actually given. Other Israelites had such names as Jushabhesed (1 Chron. iii. 20), Haah-ashtari (1 Chron. iv. 6), Romamti-ezer (1 Chron. xxv. 4), Machnadebai (Ezra x. 40), and the like. Assyrian names were even longer; *e.g.* Asshur-bel-nisi-su, Asshur-kinat-ili-kain, etc. In ordinary parlance, names of this type were commonly shortened, "Shalman-eser" becoming "Shalman" (Hos. x. 14), "Sennacherib" "Jareb" (Hos. x. 6), and the like.

Ver. 4.—**My father . . . my mother.** "Abi," "Immi," would have been among the first utterances of childhood—simple sounds, combinations of primary vowels with labials, corresponding in easiness of utterance to "Pappy," "Mammy," rather than to the expressions of the text. A child commonly utters such sounds when it is about a year old. **The riches of Damascus.** The position of Damascus lay in the direct path of the main trade that was carried on between the West and East, which was conducted by the merchants of Tyre chiefly, and passed from the Syrian coast by way of Damascus and Tadmor to Nineveh and Babylon. This commerce greatly enriched the cities lying upon its route. "Damascus," says Ezekiel, addressing Tyre, "was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, *for the multitude of all riches;* in the wine of Helbon, and white wool" (xxvii. 18). The "palaces of Benhadad" seem to have been noted for their magnificence (Jer. xlix. 27; Amos i. 4). **The spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria.** Scripture does not record the fulfilment of this prophecy, which makes the same Assyrian king carry off the spoil of Samaria and the spoil of Damascus, fixing also the time of the carrying off as within a few years of the time when the prophecy was given. But the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser himself supply the deficiency. They state that this monarch "sent the population, the goods of the people of Beth-Omri, and their furniture to the land of Assyria;" after which he "appointed Husih (Hoshea) to the dominion over them," and fixed their annual tribute at two talents of gold and a thousand talents of silver (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 52).

Vers. 5—10.—THE FLOOD OF ASSYRIAN INVASION WILL PASS FROM SYRIA AND SAMARIA INTO JUDÆA, BUT WILL THERE BE ARRESTED. Syria and Samaria were barriers, breakwaters, so placed as to stem the tide of invasion, and be a defence to Judæa against Assyrian attack. When once they were overwhelmed, the waters would have free course, and the submersion of Judæa was certain. It might be delayed by the Divine favour, and would be, so long as the people, or even a remnant of them, remained faithful, but only through the might of the name Immanuel, "God with us."

Ver. 6.—**Forasmuch as this people.** It is a question which people is intended, Judah or Israel. Ewald supposes Judah, and draws the conclusion that there was a strong party in Jerusalem which favoured "the son of Tabeal." Dr. Kay does the same, but understands the charge against Judah to be, not that it sympathized with Rezin, but that it fell into the same sins. Other commentators suggest that Israel is the people intended (as in ch. ix. 16), the sense being carried on from ver. 4, where the word "Samaria" is suggestive of the Israelite people. **Refuseth the waters of Shiloah.** The "pool of Siloah" (Neh. iii. 15) was the tank or reservoir at the south-western foot of Ophel, which is supplied with water by a narrow conduit cut through the limestone rock for a distance of 1750 feet from the "Pool of the Virgin" on the opposite side of Ophel, in the Kedron valley. This pool itself is fed from reservoirs under the temple area, which have not yet been fully explored. It is probable that Isaiah uses the expression "waters of Shiloah" in a general sense for the streams, springs, reservoirs, conduits, which supplied the temple, and were connected with its service. "Refusing the waters of Shiloah" would then be, without any violent metaphor, refusing the temple service and worship, which was exactly what the Israelites had done from the time of Jeroboam. **That go softly.** In contrast with the "waters of the river, strong and many," of the next verse. They who refused the mild and gentle government of Jehovah should experience the impetuous and torrent-like rush of the Assyrian armies. **Rejoice in Rezin;** rather, *rejoice with Rezin;* i.e. sympathize with him, rejoice when he rejoices.

Ver. 7.—**The waters of the river, strong and many.** "The river" is, of course, the Euphrates, as in ch. vii. 20. In its lower

course the Euphrates often overflows its banks, and inundates the adjacent districts, causing vast damage to crops, and sometimes threatening to break down the walls of cities (Loftus, 'Chaldea and Susiana,' p. 7). It is scarcely likely, however, that Isaiah had any acquaintance with this fact. His experience would probably have been limited to the "swellings of Jordan" (Jer. xii. 5; comp. Josh. iii. 15). **All his glory** (comp. ch. x. 12, 16, 18, etc.). **He shall come up over all his channels.** A graphic description of the swelling of rivers in the East. These, when they are low, contract their waters from the many channels, in which they ordinarily flow, into some one or two, leaving the others dry. The first effect of a flood is to fill all the channels, after which it may proceed further and overflow the banks.

Ver. 8.—**And he shall pass through Judah**; rather, *he shall pass on into Judah* ("He shall sweep onward into Judah," Revised Version). The Assyrians will not be content with invading Syria and Samaria; they will "pass on into Judæa." It is not clear whether this is to be done immediately by Tiglath-Pileser, or by one of his successors at a later date. There is reason to believe from Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions that he used the territory of Ahaz for the passage of his armies as those of a vassal king, but did not ravage them. **He shall reach even to the neck.** The Assyrian attacks on Judæa shall stop short of destroying it. The flood shall not submerge the head, but only rise as high as the neck. This prophecy was fulfilled, since it was not Assyria, but Babylon, which destroyed the Jewish kingdom. **The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land.** The Assyrian armies shall visit every part of the land. The sudden change of metaphor is in the manner of Isaiah (see ch. i. 30, 31; v. 24, 30, etc.). **O Immanuel.** On the importance of this address, as indicating the kingly, and so (probably) the Divine character of Immanuel, see the notes on ch. vii. 14. Isaiah could not speak of the land as belonging to his own infant son.

Ver. 9.—**Associate yourselves.** It is impossible to obtain this meaning from the existing Hebrew text, which must be translated, "Be angry," or "Rage" ("Make an uproar," Revised Version). The prophet passes from the consideration of the opposition offered to Jehovah by Israel, Syria, and Assyria, to a general consideration of all the nations of the earth. He challenges them to the combat against Jehovah, and confidently predicts their defeat. **O ye people**; rather, *O ye peoples* (compare the corresponding expression in the next clause, "All ye of far countries").

Ver. 10.—**Take counsel together**; literally, *devise a device*; i.e. form some plan, even the cleverest possible, against God's people, and the result will be utter failure. **It shall not stand** (comp. ch. vii. 7). **For God is with us.** In the Hebrew, *ki 'immanu-El*, "for with us (is) God," words declarative of the true meaning of the name which God had made a sign to his people (ch. vii. 14). It was his being "with them" that could alone save them from their enemies.

Vers. 11—16.—THE GROUNDS OF ISAIAH'S CONFIDENCE. Having declared his absolute confidence, not only that the attack of Pekah and Rezin will fail (vers. 1—4), but that Assyria also (ver. 8), nay, that all the nations of the earth (ver. 9) will fail, and bring destruction upon themselves, if they "devise devices" against God's true people, the prophet explains the ground of his confidence by relating a special "instruction" which he had received from God some time previously. He had been bidden to separate himself from the mass of his countrymen in thought and feeling, and to cling only to Jehovah, who would "be for a Sanctuary" (ver. 14) to his own, but "for a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence" to all others.

Ver. 11.—**For the Lord.** Mr. Cheyne regards this passage as "a short oracle, complete in itself," and entirely unconnected with what has preceded. But the initial *ki*, "for," is in that case inexplicable. **Spake thus to me with a strong hand**; literally, *with strength of hand*—i.e. laying a strong grasp upon him; and, as it were, constraining him to attend (comp. Ezek. i. 3; iii. 14, 22, etc.). **That I should not walk in the way of this people.** Isaiah was bidden not to "follow a multitude to evil" (Exod. xxiii. 2). It was not merely idolatry against which he was warned, but the whole spirit and tone of the society of his day. He was not to entertain their suspicions, or to hope their hopes, or to fear their fears. He was to take a line of his own, to fear God and him only; then God would be "for a Sanctuary" to him.

Ver. 12.—**Say ye not.** The transition from the singular to the plural is noticeable. It implies that Isaiah did not stand alone, but had followers—a "little flock," it may be—but still enough to give him the support of sympathy (comp. ver. 16). **A confederacy**; rather, *treason*, or *conspiracy* (see 2 Sam. xv. 12; 1 Kings xvi. 20; 2 Kings xi. 12; xii. 20; Jer. xi. 9; Ezek. xxii. 25, etc.). The command is, not to call a course of conduct treasonable simply because the people generally so call it. Jeremiah was charged

with treason for preaching the hopelessness of offering resistance to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. xx. 1; xxvi. 8—11). Those who opposed an Assyrian alliance were probably now taxed with treason. **To all them to whom**; rather, *everything which*. Translate the entire clause thus: *Call ye not conspiracy everything which this people shall call conspiracy.* **Neither fear ye their fear.** They feared man (ch. vii. 2). Isaiah and his disciples are commanded to fear no one but God.

Ver. 13.—**Sanctify the Lord of hosts.** God was sanctified by being believed in (Numb. xx. 12). They who feared Rezin and Pekah, despite of God's assurances that their design should fail, did not believe in him, and so did not "sanctify" him.

Ver. 14.—**He shall be for a Sanctuary** (comp. Ezek. xi. 16, "Yet will I be to them as a little Sanctuary"). A sanctuary is "a refuge" (Ps. xc. 1; xci. 9), and something more. It is a holy refuge, a place which is a refuge because of its holiness. Its material counterpart in the Mosaic system is, not "the city of refuge," but the altar (1 Kings i. 50; ii. 28). **Both the houses of Israel**; *i.e.* "the two reigning houses of Samaria and Judæa," both of which were Israelite. Both the "houses" would ultimately forsake Jehovah, and find in him a "Snare" and a "Rock of offence."

Ver. 15.—**Many among them** (so the Vulgate, Ewald, Delitzsch, and Knobel). But most others translate, "Many shall stumble thereon," *i.e.* on the stone and the rock (Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Vance Smith, Kay, Cheyne). **Fall, and be broken.** The effect of stumbling against a stone (Matt. xxi. 44; Luke xx. 18). **Be snared, and be taken.** The effect of being caught in a gin (Ps. ix. 15, 16).

Ver. 16.—**Bind up the testimony, etc.** The words are still those of Jehovah, addressed to his servant Isaiah. God commands that the prophecy shall be written in a roll, which is then to be carefully tied with a string and sealed, for future use. **Seal the Law**; rather, *the instruction*—the advice given in vers. 12—15 (comp. Dan. xii. 4).

Vers. 17, 18.—ISAIAH DEFINES HIS OWN ATTITUDE AND THAT OF HIS CHILDREN. It is questioned whether something has not fallen out between vers. 16 and 17. The transition is exceedingly abrupt, undoubtedly; but perhaps not more abrupt than elsewhere in Isaiah and the prophets contemporary with him. The Divine "instruction" comes to an end in ver. 16; and Isaiah might have been expected to comment on it, or enforce its teaching; but he does neither. He simply states what his own attitude will be under the coming calamity (ver. 8). He will "wait for the Lord and look to him" (ver. 17), and consider himself and his children as doing a work for God in being "signs" (ver. 18)—signs to which the rest of Israel may look, and from which they may derive sufficient hope and confidence to carry them through the dark time which is approaching.

Ver. 17.—**I will wait upon the Lord**; rather, *I will wait for the Lord*; i.e. "await the time of his relenting" (see ch. xxx. 18; lxiv. 4, etc.). **That hideth his face from the house of Jacob** (compare the threats in Deut. xxxi. 17; xxxii. 20). The light of God's countenance is to the spiritual what that of the sun is to the material world. All life, health, joy, happiness, proceed from it. This light was now to be withdrawn for a time on account of the people's sins. But Isaiah would "wait" for its reappearance.

Ver. 18.—**I and the children . . . are for signs.** Isaiah's children seem to have been "for signs," especially in respect of their names. Shear-Jashub meant "A remnant shall return" (ch. x. 21), and thus held out two hopes; one that a remnant of Israel would return to God and become his true servants, another that a remnant would return from the captivity that had been prophesied (ch. v. 13). Maher-shalal-hash-baz—"Plunder speeds, spoil hastens"—was a "sign" of a different kind. Primarily, his name referred to the spoiling of Damascus and Samaria (vers. 3, 4); but it may further have indicated a time of general disturbance, plunder, and ravage. It is not quite clear in what respects Isaiah was a "sign." Perhaps he, too, in his name, which meant "(Our) salvation is Jehovah"—certainly also in his symbolical acts (ch. xx. 3), and possibly in the firmness of his faith, which never wavered. **From the Lord of hosts**; literally, *from by the Lord of hosts*—an expression like the French *de chez*. God had supernaturally appointed the sign in one case (vers. 1—4), but in the other two had merely brought them about by the secret working of his providence. But the prophet treats all three as coming equally from him. **Which dwelleth in Mount Zion.** Here, again, is encouragement. God has not quitted Zion. The Shechinah still rests between the cherubim in the holy of holies. While this is so, God is still *with* his people (Immanuel).

Vers. 19—22.—ISAIAH RECOMMENDS LOOKING TO GOD AND THE REVEALED WORD RATHER THAN TO NECROMANCY. AFFLICTION WILL

BRING ISRAEL TO GOD. Isaiah returns, in ver. 19, to the consideration of his disciples. In the terrible times impending, they will be recommended to have recourse to necromancy; he urges that they should look to God and the Law. He then further suggests that, in the coming affliction which he describes (vers. 21, 22), men will generally turn for relief to the same quarter (ver. 20).

Ver. 19.—**Seek unto them that have familiar spirits.** In times of great distress the Israelites seem always to have been tempted to consult those among them who pretended to magic and divination. So Saul in the Philistine war resorted to the witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii. 7—20); Manasseh, threatened by Esar-haddon, "used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards" (2 Kings xxi. 6). Israel generally, oppressed by Syria and Assyria, "used divination and enchantments" (2 Kings xvii. 17). There was the same inclination now on the part of many Jews. The vexed question of the actual powers possessed by such persons cannot be discussed within the limits of a footnote. It has, moreover, already been treated in the present Commentary, in connection with Lev. xix. 31. **Wizards that peep, and that mutter**; rather, *that chirp and mutter*. Tricks of the ventriloquists, probably, who disguised their voices, and represented that they were the voices of ghosts (comp. ch. xxix. 4). The natural speech of some tribes has been compared to the "chirping of birds" (Herod., iv. 183; Hornemann, 'Travels,' p. 119). **Should not a people, etc.?** Very abrupt and elliptical. Isaiah means to say, "Do not attend to them; but answer, Should not a people," etc.? **For the living.** This may either mean "*instead of* the living," or "*on behalf of* the living." The latter meaning is preferable. The full phrase would be, "Should a people on behalf of the living seek to the dead?" or, Would not that be plainly preposterous?

Ver. 20.—**To the Law and to the testimony.** A sort of watchword or battle-cry, to be used by the faithful when God's enemies assailed them. Compare Gideon's cry (Judg. vii. 18), "For the Lord and for Gideon." **If they speak not according to this word, it is because** there is no light in them; rather, *Surely they will speak according to this word, when there is no dawn for them*; i.e. when they are plunged in darkness (ver. 22) and distress, and see no prospect of better days, surely they—the people generally—will rally to this cry, and repeat it, "For the *Law* and for the testimony." They will not always trust in necromancy.

Vers. 21, 22 are supposed by some to be out of place, and to belong properly to the description of the Assyrian invasion, given in vers. 7, 8. But this bold solution of a difficulty is scarcely to be commended, there being no limit to its use. An order followed in all the manuscripts should not be disturbed, if it gives any tolerable sense. Such a sense can, it is thought, be found here by regarding the two verses as exegetical of the last clause of ver. 20—"when there is no dawn for them."

Ver. 21.—**They shall pass through it.** "It," which is feminine, must mean "the land." The Jews left in it shall wander about it (comp. ch. vii. 21—25), seeking pasture for the remnant of their cattle. **They shall fret themselves**; rather, *they shall be deeply angered* (Cheyne). **And curse their king and their God.** As the causes of their sufferings. **And look upward.** Not in hope, but in rage and defiance.

Ver. 22.—**They shall look unto the earth.** For necessary nutriment, or simply as the place to which downcast and despairing eyes are turned naturally. **They shall be driven to darkness.** So Kay, who thinks the Captivity is meant; but it seems better to render the whole passage, with Mr. Cheyne, "They shall look to earth, and behold, distress and darkness, gloom of affliction, and thick darkness driven (upon them)." The darkness is spoken of as if it were a thing palpable, like rain or snow (comp. Exod. x. 21).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*Waters of Shiloah.* The waters of Shiloah issued from the rock where God had set his Name and fixed the symbol of his presence. They were a copious supply, ever welling forth from an inscrutable source for the refreshment and delectation of Israel. Their overplus irrigated numerous gardens in the valley at the base of the temple hill, and made the desert "blossom like the rose." Shiloah is the same as "Shiloh" (Gen. xlix. 10), and "Shiloh" means "sent," or "he who is sent." Hence we may view as "waters of Shiloah"—

I. THE TEACHING OF THE TEMPLE AND ITS RITES, which God *sent* to Israel by the hand of his servant Moses for their refreshment and delight—a stream of living water to those who accepted the truths which the temple rites embodied or symbolized; a

"river" which "made glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High" (Ps. xlvi. 4).

II. THE TEACHING OF THE PROPHETS, whom God continually *sent*, "rising up betimes and *sending*" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 15), of which Isaiah said primarily, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (ch. lv. 1)—these waters representing the truth of God which he was commissioned to preach. This teaching welled forth from the true "Rock;" for it was "the Spirit of Christ" which inspired the prophets, and made them ever approximate more and more toward the standard of evangelical teaching which was to be set up later. The prophets' doctrine was for the refreshment and comfort of the Jews primarily; but its influence was felt beyond the limits of Judaism. In many a pagan wilderness the superfluous waters flowing from this source created gardens, where blossoms bloomed, which, without the "living water" of revealed truth, could never have come into being.

III. THE TEACHING OF THE EVER-BLESSED SON, the true "Shiloh"—*sent* by the almighty and most merciful Father to redeem the world and reconcile it to him. He is "the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii. 1); "the Well-spring of wisdom" (Prov. xviii. 4); the inexhaustible and inscrutable Source, to whom all may come freely and drink (John vii. 37). His doctrine doth "drop as the rain," and his speech doth "distil as the dew" (Deut. xxxii. 2); he gives to all men to "take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17). From depths unsearchable in the nature of him who is "the Rock of our salvation" flow forth rivers of living water, cleansing, purifying, refreshing, satisfying the soul. He washes us once, in a material way, in baptism; he washes us ten thousand times spiritually, as often as he cleanses us from sin; he gives us to drink of a water that is henceforth to us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). True "waters of Shiloh" are these. All may "take of them freely." The fountain is absolutely inexhaustible. Nor are its benefits confined to those only for whose sake especially it was given—baptized members of the Church; they flow on to others also. Great are the uncovenanted mercies of God. The child Christ was proclaimed to be "a Light to lighten the *Gentiles*," no less than "the Glory of his people Israel" (Luke ii. 32). And so it is. The stream of Christian teaching flows on from the Church into the world, if not with sufficient force to create a garden, at any rate so as to bring forth amid the arid wastes many a green plant, many a blooming flower. The washing of atonement is extended, we confidently believe, to thousands who are not formally within the covenant. And the flow of the water will never cease. Even in heaven there will be "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii. 1), of which the saints of God will drink eternally (Rev. xxii. 17).

Vers. 12, 13.—*The fear of man and the fear of God contrasted.* These two fears may be compared (1) in respect of their grounds; (2) in respect of their results.

I. IN THEIR GROUNDS. Our fear of man rests upon our apprehension of the power of man to do us hurt. Men may injure us (1) in our reputation, (2) in our property, (3) in respect of those who are near and dear to us, (4) in respect of our persons. A certain fear of the supreme civil power in the state under which we live is natural and proper; it is one of the elements which bind society together, and could not cease to exist without disadvantage. Malefactors are restrained by it (Rom. xiii. 4); and even the mass of well-meaning men are strengthened in their good intentions by the knowledge that there is a human authority above them which notes their conduct and will punish any serious departure from the rules of right behaviour. So far, then, the fear of man has a sound basis. We also naturally, and almost necessarily, fear our enemies, if they are powerful, whether public or private, our fear being proportional to our belief in their power and malignity. It is this ground of fear which is apt to be unduly influential upon us, from our exaggerated notions of what man is able to effect. We too often forget that man can do nothing but what God permits (John xix. 11), that he is absolutely impotent against God, who can shatter his designs, or strike him with sudden death at any moment. Again, we do not always bear in mind the fact that man can only injure us in respect of temporal things, his utmost punishment being to "kill the body," whereas God's power extends beyond the grave. The fear of God has for its ground a double apprehension or conviction: (1) our belief in his power, and

(2) our conception of his absolute holiness. These grounds are unassailable, and admit of no exaggeration, so that we cannot fear God too much, though we may fear him in a wrong way. If God's character be misconceived, if he be viewed as malignant or even as revengeful, then our fear of him, being based upon a wrong ground, may lead us astray. Such was the *δεισιδαιμονία* of too many in the ancient world, whose deities were objects of fear, but not of love.

II. IN THEIR RESULTS. The fear of man has no good effect except upon evil-doers, and upon those who but for such fear might become evil-doers. These it may in some degree restrain. But if, so far, it may have a good result, it is apt in other ways to have results that are anything but good. 1. Fear of man causes the morally weak to follow the bad example of the wicked, who would otherwise ridicule or even persecute them. 2. Fear of man makes feeble and oppressed classes servile, untruthful, cowardly. 3. Fear of man induces many to keep back their honest convictions, and even applaud the evil courses which in their heart they condemn and dislike. 4. Fear of man has in some cases led to an absolute denial of God and of Christ, making men renegades to their religion, and professors of a creed which they detest. 5. On the other hand, fear of man may sometimes cause men to be hypocrites, to pretend to a faith and a piety which they do not possess, if those who have power over them require it. Hence the fear of man is so often condemned in Scripture (ch. xxxv. 4; li. 7; Jer. i. 8; Ezek. iii. 9; Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 14, etc.). The fear of God, if it be of the kind called above *δεισιδαιμονία*, may harden men in sin, or lead them to despair of God's mercy; but if it be the *true* fear of God, that is to say, if it have an element of love in it, the results cannot but be excellent. 1. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10); it restrains from evil in early life (Prov. xvi. 6); it deepens into awe as time goes on; it produces hatred of sin (Prov. viii. 13); it becomes "a fountain of life" (Prov. xiv. 27). 2. They who grow up in the fear of God acquire a solidity and strength of character that nothing else can give; they have a firm foundation on which to rest; they "do not fear what flesh can do unto them" (Ps. lvi. 4); they are truthful, manly, brave. And, further, they are reverent. The fear of God checks over-familiarity, begets reserve, produces silence. "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God," etc. (Eccles. v. 1, 2). 3. Though "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18), yet "the fear of the Lord endureth for ever" (Ps. xix. 9). There is no age, however advanced, that can dispense with it; for no man in this life is ever "perfect in love." The beloved apostle even represents the fear of God as continuing in heaven. They that stood on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, and sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, before God's throne, exclaimed, "Who shall not *fear* thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name?" (Rev. xv. 2—4); and again, when the "great voice of much people was heard in heaven, saying, Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God, and the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia, a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye saints, and ye that *fear* him, both small and great" (Rev. xix. 1—5).

Ver. 17.—*Waiting for God.* "Waiting for God" is submitting ourselves to his good pleasure in respect of time, being content that he should settle the question, "How long?" and looking still to him from first to last, however extended the term during which our "waiting" has to continue. It is important that we wait—

I. PATIENTLY. "I waited *patiently* for the Lord," says holy David, "and he inclined unto me, and heard my calling" (Ps. xl. 1). A thousand years are with God as one day, and one day as a thousand years—"our age is even as nothing in respect of him" (Ps. xxxix. 5). It is, no doubt, hard for man to be patient, not to weary in well-doing, not to fret at what seems to him useless and unnecessary delay, not to desire to expedite matters and bring about the accomplishment of any end which seems to him good *at once*. But God's ways are not as our ways. God is never in a hurry. God tries his people by delay, and forms in them the temper of patience, and "lets it have its perfect work" (Jas. i. 4). God knows that we "have need of patience" (Heb. x. 36), and makes our life a discipline of patience, that so we may be the more conformed to his image.

II. CHEERFULLY. It is not enough to wait patiently, unless we also wait cheerfully.

"Rejoice in the Lord *always*," says the apostle; "and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). We should do the will of God "from the heart." If he makes our cross to be one of waiting, we should feel that waiting is what we need, what is best for us; and we should be thankful that God deals with us so lovingly as to lay this burden upon us.

III. FAITHFULLY. All waiting is a trial of faith. God "hides his face from us." Will he ever cease to do so? Will he ever again cheer us with the light of his countenance? He does not grant our petitions. Will he ever grant them? Our ghostly enemy continually suggests these questions, endeavouring to undermine and destroy our faith and trust in God. It is our part, with Isaiah, to defeat him by continually "looking for God" and resting upon him. We must "have him always before our face;" hold fast by him, cling to him, look to him, and pray to him "without ceasing" for support and strength during the whole weary time of waiting, or our faith may fail, and our trial prove too much for us. We must, therefore, also wait—

IV. PRAYERFULLY; *i.e.*, with continued earnest supplication to God, both for the end that we desire and for his help while he keeps us waiting. His help alone will keep us patient, cheerful, and faithful during the time that our trial lasts, and render it the blessing that he intends it to be to us.

Ver. 19.—*Seeking for the living to the dead.* The necromancy of ancient times was a system of appeal to the dead on behalf of the living. The shades or ghosts of dead men were supposed to be brought up from Hades by the necromancer, who compelled them to answer his questions, and was supposed to make their answers useful to the living. A system not very dissimilar has prevailed of recent years in many parts both of England and of America, whereby "spirits" are believed to be brought into communication with living men for the presumed benefit of the latter. To all such cases the reproach of the prophet would seem to apply: "Should men seek for the living to the dead?" What help is it likely that the dead can give more than the living, even if they can be communicated with, which must always be doubtful? Why appeal to them when we do not know whether they can hear, nor whether, if they hear, they can render aid? We can usually appeal for the living to the living, who can certainly hear, and in most instances can help to some extent. And there is one living One on whom it is always possible to call, who always hears, and can always help if he sees fit. Thus every form of necromancy is folly, since (1) we have no assured ground for believing that any good can result from it, and (2) we can resort to One who is certainly able to do all and more than all that we require.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Symbolic utterances.* THE PROPHET'S POPULAR METHOD. He wished to inspire hope in the people as well as in the king—to expel the panic fear of the two northern kings, and impress the expectation that the two capitals of these kings would themselves be taken and sacked. The way in which he set about this was simple yet remarkable. 1. He took a large tablet, and wrote therein in "popular characters," *i.e.* in large text, distinct from the literary character, perhaps a character half pictorial, the words "Hasten-booty, Speed-spoil," or "Booty-quick, Spoil-speed." In those days, there were no newspapers, no puffing placards staring from the walls, and books were only for the learned. This was suggestive to write up a sentiment or suggestion like this for the public eye. To this day in the East, if you ask the people their reason for believing this or that, their answer will be, "Is it not written? Men did not write books to deceive us." To write this pregnant phrase was, then, to *impress* it on the popular imagination. "Go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever" (ch. xxx. 8). "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Hab. ii. 2). Then, to fix the solemn act of putting up the tablet in memory, he takes two witnesses—Uriah the high priest (2 Kings xvi. 10), and Zechariah, perhaps "mayor of Jerusalem" at the time. 2. Next, he gave this same mystic name to a son born about the same time, so that the boy might be, as it were, a "living epistle" by means of his significant name, "known and read of all men," and

keeping alive in their hearts the hopeful prophecy of his father. Before the boy can lisp his parents' names, that prophecy will be fulfilled, and the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the Assyrian king. (1) The lessons of the teacher need to be addressed to the senses of the multitude. The sign for the eye, the parable for the imagination, the illustration which "strikes," the epigram and "winged word" which fastens in the memory,—all may be pressed into the service. (2) Pith and condensation should be studied. A sermon is not wasted if the text sticks, or if a single pregnant saying has lodged itself in the mind, as a seed to stir and quicken thought to purpose.—J.

Vers. 5—15.—"*God with us.*" The prophet looks out on the troubled prospect as on a deluge, amidst which the ark of promise carrying the elect, the remnant, the Church of the faithful and chosen, is seen riding.

I. TEMPORAL ALLUSIONS. 1. *The foreign sympathies of the people.* Tired of the inefficient reign of Ahaz, they watch for the approach of the two northern kings with interest. They have forgotten their patriotism, which once rallied round the house of David as a political and spiritual centre. The "softly flowing brook of Siloah" by Jerusalem was symbolic of that house. 'Twas the river that made glad the city of God, the holy place of the Highest's dwelling (Ps. xlvi.). Small was it compared with the great flood of Nile or Euphrates, but mild and gentle. "Nile, with its monstrous crocodile and *behemah*, might be the image of the cruel Egyptian rule; and mighty Euphrates, with its frequent overflowings, that of the Assyrian power and of its swift extension." As in ancient folk-lore dragons were supposed to haunt the waters, so the Assyrian power was like the dæmon of the great river (cf. ch. xxvii. 1). 2. *The wave of Assyrian conquest.* Onward it will come, a magnificent flood, to punish, to purify. The Assyrian king, with all the "pomp and circumstance of war," an awful array, will, as the river breaking its bounds and overflowing all banks, rush into Judah, overflowing and rolling, till the flood reaches to men's necks; or, as with the outspread wings of the flying dragon, the foe will cover all the breadth of the land—land of the passionately hoped-for Immanuel.

II. VICTORIOUS SPIRITUAL HOPES. The name of the Messiah, "God with us," acts like a charm on the troubled spirit of the seer. His discourse suddenly becomes a bold menace against all heathendom. 1. *Material power defied.* Let the nations rage and let them—*despair!* Let them fit out their armaments and—*despair!* exclaims the prophet. Let them form their plans—they shall be broken; speak their words—they shall not stand. For "with us is God!" What magic in a name, in a phrase! Carrying our thought forward through the centuries, we recall what powers were defied, what wonders wrought, what force reduced to impotence, what counsels reduced to folly, by the magic of the Name of Jesus. Yet it is not the mere name, but the reality denoted by the name, believed and felt to be operating through the human spirit, which is the source of energy. 2. *Personal inspiration.* Idle had been these defiances, if the prophet did not know of a secret warranty for them in his own breast, in his own spiritual record. "Thus said Jehovah unto me in the ecstasy." He had heard a voice which all could not hear, and had cleared his vision in a light not vouchsafed to the vulgar. It was a discriminating light. He was taught to see that not all the multitude called rebellious was really such, nor all that it feared was really to be dreaded. The allusion is somewhat obscure. Probably under the guise of fear the people were secretly rejoicing, and meditating the dethronement of Ahaz. The language strikes a side-blow at the pusillanimity of the time. The prophet has learned that Jehovah is the true Object of fear; that noble and steadfast reverence which, a mightier passion, expels the feebler and baser.

> "Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
> Have nothing else to fear."

If this condition be fulfilled, Jehovah will be found an inviolable Sanctuary, a Shelter from all coming trials. We find the same thought in Ezek. xi. 16. He will be a "little Sanctuary" to the fugitive and dispersed among the nations. Fleeing from the pursuer, men laid hold of the "horns of the altar." These things are to us a parable. Religion is the spirit's asylum from all distress. In times when the newspaper teems with war,

revolution, rumours of dread, or the evils of social life seem intolerable, we may go into our chamber, shut to the door, pray to our Father in secret, flee to the steps of the altar that slopes through darkness up to God, and lo! a new scenery unfolds, and from the secret place of the Most High fear vanishes, and reverential contemplation reigns in the spirit.

III. SOLEMN WARNINGS. He who will ever prove an Asylum to the faithful and an Altar of refuge, will be to the faithless a Stone of stumbling, a Rock of offence, a Trap, and a Snare. We know how these thoughts were applied to the coming Christ, and how they were fulfilled. Set "for the fall and rising again of many in Israel," and for the "revealing of the thoughts of many hearts," he is to them that believe precious—"a Stone, a tried Stone; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." 1. *The Name of God is an object of dread or of delight to us* according to the state of our own affections. 2. *Truth is a touchstone.* Either we recognize in it the "pearl of great price," and are willing to sacrifice all to possess it, or it is like a certain stone of which Plutarch tells, found in the river Inachos, which turned black in the hand of the false witness. Truth seems like falsehood to the debased imagination and depraved will.—J.

Vers. 16—22.—*The helplessness of superstition.* Here a mass of thought is found, struggling for expression as the new-lighted fuel struggles into flame.

I. THE ORACLE SEALED. 'Tis time to make an end. Let what has been written remain, rolled up and sealed and kept, until the day when those taciturn letters shall find their tongue and burst into flame. And, indeed, every true thing may be said to be "written down for the time to come, for ever and ever." It may be lost sight of for a time, but only to be recovered. For though the records of human thought, nay, the human mind itself, is a palimpsest, oft scribbled over, the eternal writing of God upon the conscience is indelible, and will be seen, despite wilful blindness and pedantic glosses. The testimony we bear is first and last for the eyes of God. The Roman poet (Hor., 'Ep.,' i. 20) seems to dread the fate of oblivion for his verse at certain moments—cannot brook the thought that his roll shall be packed into its case and left unread. But such was not to be the fate of the poetry of Horace, nor of any true poetry. God can read through the closed pages of true lives, and faithful utterances find audience in the court of angels, in the halls of eternity.

II. PLEDGES OF FUTURE GOOD. "I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are signs and omens in Israel on the part of Jehovah of hosts, who dwelleth on the Zion-mount." His own name meant "God's salvation;" those of his children, as we have seen, "The remnant will return" (or, "be converted"), and "Hasten-booty, Speed-spoil." For the soul that is strong in faith is also strong in hope, and it makes its own omens, or finds omens where others can see none.

III. MAGICAL SUGGESTIONS REPUDIATED. The wizard, the magician, the "medium," as he is now called, was in great vogue in the days of Ahaz. Just as at modern *séances*, these media would imitate the supposed voices of ghosts in some low chirping or muttering tone. What keener satire could be launched against such practices than that of the prophet! It is indeed turning to the dead, instead of to the living and the true God. Where the taste for truth is spoiled, the appetite for the extraordinary and marvellous springs up; and men will fall headlong into the greatest follies, provided they flatter their self-conceit, though wide awake to their interest, and keen to detect the impositions of others in general.

IV. TOO-LATE REPENTANCE. The language is condensed, the thought fused in a mass. But the meaning seems to be—too late will the weak and wicked apply to the true oracles they had forsaken for the false. "In extreme distress, and afflicted with the pangs of starvation, the man rushes as a maniac through the land, curses in the moment of his terrible distress and exasperation his god and lord whom he vainly and slavishly served, and directs his eyes upwards to the true God. But when he looks down to the earth again because he had discerned no light above, he sees there the most dreadful darkness and distress, without any ray of light, without any hope breaking through it, and thus he is hunted forth again into the darkness to perish therein (cf. Job xv. 22, 23; xviii. 5, 13)" (Ewald).—J.

Ver. 17.—*Waiting and looking.* "And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his

face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." There is life in a look. It is so true that the eye is the window of the soul, even as speech is the door of the soul. "Look unto him, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," teaches us how the whole nature of man can concentrate itself in a look.

I. DARK HOURS. The Lord "hides his face." This expression is used, because the face is the expression of character and feeling. It reveals our emotions of love and anger, of confidence and distrust. To hide it, is to turn away in disgust, in sorrow, in shame. God is ashamed of his people Israel, whom he had set apart for his glory. A hidden face is a terrible punishment. The child feels that, and longs for the returning smile of approval and love. How beautiful is the prayer, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us"!

II. DIVINE SUPPLICATION. "I will wait upon the Lord." Not with hurried petition does the prophet come, but with an attitude of soul that shall show depth of desire and earnestness of purpose. Prayer is a sign of renewed life. We cannot long continue to ask for blessings that we do not really desire. Hypocrisy soon fatigues, even where it is not found out; and our poor human nature, sinful as it is, wearies of subterfuges. In waiting upon God we have the surest evidence that our penitence is sincere and our faith vital.

III. UPLIFTED VISION. "I will look for him." Men look for so much, and not for God. For human approval, for earthly success, for ambition's tinsel crown. In looking for God his Saviour, the prophet is looking for all that the house of Jacob needs. It is a wistful eye that we read of here. Anxious, but yet hopeful. Some had "sought unto familiar spirits, and wizards that peep and mutter;" and it seems as if the world had not yet grown wise enough to forsake all that kind of seeking to-day! "Should not a people seek unto their God?" asks the prophet; and in every age those who look alone unto him have never been disappointed. When the eyes are opened, and the heart is full, even if the lips be not eloquent, God can read deep meaning in the earnest gaze of faith; and he will return and bless his people Israel, according to his Word.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*Orders of service.* We may serve God in more ways than one. There is—

I. UNWILLING SERVICE. We may conclude, from 2 Kings xvi. 10, 11, that Uriah the priest (ver. 2) had no real interest in the service of Jehovah; that he did what Isaiah requested of him with an indifferent, if not a positively reluctant mind. We may be "requisitioned" by the great King in the long warfare he is conducting. He who is rebelliously refusing to place his intelligence, his spiritual nature, his resources, at the command of the Divine Saviour, need not be surprised if he finds himself constrained to serve his generation against his will. By violent excesses sinful men have made their own cause odious; by shameful cruelty, calling out heroic endurance, they have made the cause of truth most honourable in the eyes of men. God can make the wrath and the foolishness and even the stubbornness (*e.g.* Pharaoh) of men to praise him.

II. UNCONSCIOUS SERVICE. The little infant was a "sign" to the prophet and the people; it rendered a service in its own way, but it must have been an entirely unconscious one. It is a painful, and should be a preserving thought, that when we do wrong we "know not what we do,"—how heinous is our offence, or how large and long will prove to be its issues. On the other hand, it is a pleasant and inspiring thought, that when we are doing right, in our several spheres and according to our various powers and opportunities, we do not know what service we are rendering. It may be one much more highly esteemed than we imagine at the time (see Matt. xxv. 37—40). It may be one that has far more valuable and lasting results than we could possibly calculate. Especially is it true of the little child, that he is unconsciously serving his kind. The infant in the family has a softening, sweetening, humanizing influence of which it knows nothing, but which is very beautiful and valuable. Ever and everywhere will it be found that "the little child shall lead" them whom no other force will either draw or drive.

III. ACCEPTABLE SERVICE. This is: 1. *Intelligent.* Whatever the exact significance of "writing with a man's pen" (ver. 1), it is suggestive of the double truth that, in working for God, we should (1) put out all our powers in their fulness and in their

maturity, and should (2) speak (or write) words adapted to the capacity of those whom we address. Many who seek to serve throw away their opportunity, because they do not the *fitting* as well as the excellent thing; only too often "the best is the enemy of the good." 2. *Prudent.* (Ver. 2.) The prophet placed his prophecy beyond reach of cavil by securing two unexceptionable witnesses, one of them being the more convincing because his sympathies were on the other side; his testimony, therefore, none could challenge. Though conscious of the most complete integrity, it is often wise and well to be fortified by the evidence of others. Prudence as well as zeal has its place in the catalogue of Christian graces. 3. *Faithful.* It was no smooth message which the prophet was to deliver (ver. 4). The very name of the child was to be a standing threat of impending evil (ver. 3). Not only he who now speaks for God, but every Christian man, is bound to render this faithful service: his words and his life are to testify against the vice, the levity, the worldliness, the ungodliness, of his age; they are also to bear witness to the excellency and beauty of unselfish and loyal service.—C.

Vers. 5—8.—*The false standard and the fatal issue.* The cardinal error into which Israel fell was that of judging by appearances instead of by the reality. The "softly flowing waters" of the Davidic kingdom seemed far less reliable than the "strong and many waters" of Syria and of Assyria, and therefore Ephraim trusted in the one and Judah in the other of these great "powers." But they were utterly misplacing their confidence. Those waters that "went softly" and seemed so strengthless, were the river of God, and held healing virtues in their waves; those strong, tumultuous rivers which seemed so mighty contained no remedy for the stricken and declining nation. Often has it been proved that it is not the apparently insufficient which is to be despised, and as often that it is not the apparently irresistible which is to be trusted.

I. THE FALSE STANDARD. The world has always been witnessing illustrations of this error. The history of the Hebrew nation supplied many such: Noah and the mocking world that laughed at him; Abraham and the Canaanites; Moses and Pharaoh; David and Goliath; Joseph and his persecuting brethren; Elijah and Ahab, etc. The apparently weak man (or nation) had the strength of the Divine arm to sustain him (it); the apparently strong one was essentially weak and unreliable. We may see the same thing in: 1. *Christianity itself*, which in its first beginnings was a "softly going" stream as compared with the strong tumultuous waters of Jewish fanaticism and Roman militarism. 2. *Divine truth*, which sometimes goes so softly that it may almost be said of it that "there is no speech nor language, its voice is not heard;" that it "does not strive nor cry," etc., as compared with the complicated organizations of men. 3. *Holy love*, which flows on unseen, unheard, "like subterranean rivers," as compared with noisy vehemence and untempered zeal. 4. *The promises of God*, which flow so quietly and graciously through the sacred Scriptures from the beginning even to the end, as compared with the pretentious securities of worldly wisdom. If we wish to know whether we may commit the keeping of our soul, or even of our earthly interests, to those men who (or those things which) offer themselves to our choice, we must not be satisfied with the shows and semblances; we must look to the heart of things; we must ask whether there is soundness, rectitude, within; we must ask, above all other questions—Have they the approval of God with them, and the power of God behind them? For *without that* the strong river is to be shunned, and *with that* the softly going stream is to be sought.

II. THE FATAL ISSUE. 1. Roman imperialism passed away, dragging down many thousands with it in its fall. 2. Splendid but corrupt organizations have overflowed the land, even as the "waters of the strong river" were to cover Immanuel's land, and beneath their deathful influence multitudes have perished. 3. Rampant zealotry has slain its thousands, not only of those whom it ruthlessly assailed, but of those who wielded its weapon, and were partakers of its evil spirit. 4. Earthly properties and possessions have buried innumerable souls beneath their destructive weight. It is a *fatal* thing to trust that which is not worthy of our confidence: for that on which we lean falls on us and slays us; the river to whose waters we resort, instead of fertilizing and saving, floods and drowns us. The peril here is one which *threatens the Church* as well as the world. The overflowing river "fills the breadth of *thy* land, *O Immanuel.*"—C.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The impotence of ungodliness.* We learn—

I. THAT SIN SOMETIMES APPEARS IN IMPOSING ASPECTS. There were four aspects, not to say elements, of power in these world-kingdoms—*confederation, preparation* (gird yourselves), *consultation* (take counsel together), *authority* (speak the word). Sin, which is the great enemy conducting a long campaign against the Church of Christ, certainly seems as superior in strength to its present foe as did these great kingdoms of the East to Judah and to Israel; indeed, far more so. Sin has on its side: 1. Vastly preponderating numbers. 2. Rank and authority. 3. The greater material resources, including military power and money. 4. Ancient tradition and inveterate habit. 5. An apparently impregnable seat; it is defended by the strong fortresses of worldly interests, animal appetite, spiritual pride, moral indifference.

II. THAT THE PROPHETIC EYE SEES ITS UTTER OVERTHROW. "Ye shall be broken in pieces;" "it shall come to nought;" "it shall not stand." Under the shadow of the first promise we see the head of the serpent bruised (Gen. iii. 15). At the feet of the prophet we see the "little stone" "break in pieces and consume all these (earthly) kingdoms," itself "standing for ever" (Dan. ii. 44). Standing at our Master's side, we "behold Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x. 18). With apostolic hope, we look on the time when Christ "will have put down all rule, and all authority, and power," all his enemies being "under his feet" (1 Cor. xv. 24, 25). The world-power shall be utterly broken, and on its ruins shall rise "the kingdom which cannot be moved."

III. THAT OUR CONFIDENCE IS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE INVINCIBLE SAVIOUR. "For God is with us." We may rejoice to reckon our trophies already gained; we may point, with congratulation, to the growing intelligence and enthusiasm of the army of the Lord; we may hail signs of decay in ancient, enfeebled systems; but *this is our confidence:* we have with us, working in us and for us, the Holy Spirit of the Divine Redeemer: "For Immanuel."—C.

Vers. 11—15.—*Our personal relation to God.* It is clearly insufficient to know that we are on the same side as that of the majority of the good. The voice of God's people is not always his voice; their way not always his way (ver. 11). They may call for "a confederacy" when he disapproves of it. They may cry "peace" when he sees only present confusion and future disaster. They may be shaken with fear when they ought to be calm and trustful (ver. 12). They may be full of complacency when they ought to be overwhelmed with shame. We shall not be to God that which he demands of us, except we come into distinct, direct relation to himself.

I. THAT GOD SOMETIMES ACTS UPON US WITH CONSTRAINING POWER. "The Lord spake with a strong hand" (ver. 11; see Ezek. iii. 14). The Divine impulse was one that the prophet felt he must not resist. Not that it was *absolutely* irresistible, but one that a faithful man knew that he must not hesitate to obey. God often acts upon the soul of men with strong and urgent power to constrain or to restrain. He approaches and influences us thus by (1) his Divine *providence;* (2) one or other of the *privileges* he has provided for us; (3) his *Holy Spirit.*

II. THAT GOD HIMSELF IS THE TRUE REFUGE OF THE HUMAN SOUL. (Vers. 13, 14.) Here is: 1. *Our duty.* We are to fear God, to pay a reverential regard to his will, to shrink from that which grieves him, to "dread" his wrath. 2. *Its recompense.* "He shall be for a Sanctuary." In him, as in a pavilion, we shall hide. He will either deliver us *from* trouble by saving us from our enemies or *in* trouble, by granting us the sustaining grace which makes us "more than conquerors" in the midst of it. If we who are his "saints" will but "fear him" with obedient reverence, we shall then "have nothing else to fear."

"How was it, lovers of your kind,
Though ye were mocked and hated,
That ye, with clear and patient mind,
Truth's holy doctrine stated?
In God as in an ark ye kept;
Around, and not above you, swept
The flood till it abated."

III. THAT TO RESIST GOD IS TO WALK IN THE WAY OF WRONG AND RUIN. God is, to the perverse and the rebellious, "a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence" (ver. 14). God must be everything to us, for life or death. If our relation to him is not to us the fountain of everlasting joy, then it will be to us the source of unspeakable sorrow. The rejection of his truth and of himself will be our sin on earth, our condemnation in judgment, the subject and source of our remorse and retribution in the long hereafter. Our God is One whom it is infinitely worth while to make our Friend, and One whom we must not make our Enemy, if we have any love for ourselves, any interest in our own destiny.—C.

Vers. 16—18.—*The teacher's distress and his consolation.* Those who have taken positions of prominence or of influence in the Church of Christ have to bear their own peculiar burdens as they are gladdened with their own especial joys. The teacher of Divine truth, in whatever particular sphere he may be engaged, whether it be a high or a humble one, is subject to his own discouragements and encouragements. If we ask what are—

I. HIS SPECIAL TRIALS, the answer to that question is this: *Apparent failure in his work*, with all the sorrows such discomfiture involves. It is an intensely bitter experience for a human soul to pass through. What can be more distressing to one who earnestly longs for, and is striving to promote, "the kingdom of God," than to look on and see faithful labours break down and issue in nothing? Such was the keen sorrow of Isaiah. It seemed to him as if God were "hiding his face from the house of Jacob" (ver. 17); for the people would not welcome his truth, would not walk in his ways, would not trust in his mighty power. So was it with the preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. ii. 5—8), and with the psalmist (Ps. cxix. 136), and with Elijah (1 Kings xix. 10), and with Paul (Gal. i. 6; iii. 1; Phil. ii. 21; Acts xx. 29, 30); and so was it with the Master himself (John vi. 66, 67). The human teacher, at such times is grievously troubled, for he is apt to conclude (1) that God may be dissatisfied with his testimony; or (2) that he himself has not been as wise or as faithful as he might have been; or (3) that those whom he has been addressing have incurred serious guilt. But let us ask what are—

II. HIS CONSOLATIONS. They are such as these: 1. *There are disciples* who learn the truth and love it. "Bind up the testimony . . . among my disciples" (ver. 16). Isaiah was not without some who received his word, and for whom he could pray that it would be engraven on their hearts. Elijah and Paul had their disciples; the Master, we know, had his. If we will look further, we shall find that there *are* fruits on the bough, though many branches be barren; good results are not invisible, though they are not so apparent as we could wish. 2. *The God of all truth is with us*, and his ear is open to our appeal. "I will wait upon the Lord" (ver. 17). All hearts are in his hand; he is earnestly desirous of blessing his children; his promised aid is a strong assurance. 3. *The human teacher is the organ of Divine truth.* "I and the children are for signs and wonders . . . from the Lord of hosts" (ver. 18). Even their very names were significant of some truth which came from Jehovah himself. Everything about the prophet, down to his children's names, was ordered from above. The prophet only taught that which he was inspired to teach, and the truth of the everlasting God must ultimately prevail. God will not let the words of him who speaks faithfully "fall to the ground" (1 Sam. iii. 19). Even as the word of him who was "the Truth" should never pass away, so shall the words of his faithful disciples abide, doing their work in unsuspected places and in unimagined ways. The truth we have received from the Lord of hosts may long be hidden, but it will not be lost.—C.

Vers. 19—22.—*The confession of ungodliness*, etc. The prevalence of the evil and sinister arts of necromancy is exceedingly significant. The attempt to supply knowledge for the living by appealing to the dead (ver. 19) has been made in every latitude and longitude, in every age, in every condition of society. What is the significance of this fact? We have here—

I. THE CONFESSION OF UNGODLINESS AND ITS DEGRADATION. When men have thrown off their allegiance to God, when they have denied the existence of their Creator, when they have explicitly refused to seek and to serve him "in whom they

live and move and have their being," they may imagine themselves to be free from all spiritual bonds; but they are miserably mistaken. They forsake a homage which is honourable and a service which is ennobling, to fall into a superstition which is contemptible and degrading. So closely, so inseparably is man associated with the spiritual world, that, try how he may, he cannot escape from it. He that will not serve God must honour demons or consult spirits, or engage in some "cultus" which is discreditable to his intelligence and injurious to his moral nature. It is notorious that Rome never sank so low as when, losing its faith in the gods, it sank into debasing superstitions of this kind. And in this respect a corrupted civilization and an unredeemed barbarism "meet together." The penalty of ungodliness is terrible. *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

II. THE DEMAND OF INTELLIGENT PIETY. "Should not a people seek unto their God? . . . To the Law and to the testimony" (vers. 19, 20). A right-minded, rational people, possessed of that fear of God which is the beginning and also the end of wisdom, will ask—*What does God say?* For they will consider that: 1. He who made them knows, as they cannot know, what are the capacities of their nature, and what is the purpose of their life. 2. He who has all power in his hand, and who makes large requirements of his creatures, both can and will bless those whom he approves, and ban those whom he condemns. 3. Therefore it is infinitely desirable to secure his approbation and his help. Such a people will, consequently, ask—*What does his Word state?* What can we gather from his "Law" as to his will concerning us? An intelligent piety will resort to "the Law and to the testimony," not that it may find minute correspondences and detailed injunctions, but that it may light on living principles which it may itself apply to all new forms and changing conditions.

III. THE HOPELESSNESS OF SIN. If we read the prophet thus, "There is no light in them," we reach the truth that sin brings men down to a condition in which the light that has shone from reason, conscience, revelation, has gone out; in that case the sources of enlightenment are stopped, and our Lord's graphic and painful picture is realized (Matt. vi. 22, 23). But if we take the words of the text thus, "They are a people for whom no morning dawns," then we arrive at another, though a kindred truth, that sin leads down to utter spiritual hopelessness, to evil without prospect of amendment, to death without hope of life, to darkness without gleam of morning light. Men *do*, by the path of refusal and delay, reach a moral condition in which: 1. *Privilege* does not benefit them; additional services only add to their accountability without touching their soul. 2. *Chastisement* does not awaken, but only aggravate them (see ch. i. 5). 3. *Direct Divine influence* fails to lead them into the path of life. The night of spiritual death only deepens and darkens; there dawns no morning of the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus.—C.

Vers. 1, 3.—*Prophecy in a name.* The interpretation of this name demands some acquaintance with the history of the times, and with the views of political parties in the city of Jerusalem. The great danger immediately pressing was the combined attack of Rezin and Pekah, representing the neighbour-kingdoms of Syria and Israel. Isaiah had prophesied the fall of these nations, and, so, encouraged Judah to hold on, and keep trust in Jehovah's protection. But time passed on, and there were no signs of calamity overtaking Rezin and Pekah. On the other hand, they seemed to be only too successful. They had overrun the country, taking many away captive. Rezin had captured Elath, the Red Sea port. And, taking advantage of Judah's time of weakness, the Edomites were harassing the north-eastern frontier. To politicians the state of affairs was hopelessly dark; and they could see no way out of the difficulty, save by seeking alliance with the growing power of Assyria, which was pressing its conquests toward the Mediterranean. But to do this was to declare their unbelief in Isaiah's assurances, and to put public dishonour upon him as the servant of Jehovah. So he repeats his prophecy. In order that the people might know it and understand it, he puts it into one word, one name; he writes it in large letters, sets it up in a public place, and so testifies against the perilous policy which fear of the national enemies was dictating. "The tablet was to be large, and the writing was not to be with the sharp point of the artist, or learned scribe, but with a 'man's pen,' *i.e.* such as the common workmen used for sign-boards, that might fix the gaze of the careless passer-

by, and on that tablet, as though it were the heading of a proclamation or dedication, he was to write 'to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.'" This name recalls the prophecy which Isaiah had already given (ch. vii. 14—16). The word actually and precisely means "Speed plunder, haste spoil." It refers to the Assyrians whom Isaiah sees hurrying to spoil both Syria and Samaria. First the public sign, and then the child, bearing the prophetic name, were to be a constant testimony to the truth of Isaiah's words, and a means of keeping the cheering prophecy ever before the people. The passage reminds us of the value attached to, and the use made of, Old Testament *names*. On this subject F. W. Robertson has a very suggestive passage (vol. i. 41, 42): "In the Hebrew history are discernible three periods distinctly marked, in which names and words bore very different characters. These three, it has been observed by acute philologists, correspond to the periods in which the nation bore the three different appellations of Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews. In the first of these periods names meant truths, and words were the symbols of realities. The characteristics of the names given then were simplicity and sincerity. The second period begins about the time of the departure from Egypt, and it is characterized by unabated simplicity, with the addition of sublimer thought, and feeling more intensely religious. Words mean realities, but they are impregnated with deeper religious thought. The third period was at its zenith in the time of Christ; words had lost their meaning, and shared the hollow unreal state of all things." Keeping in mind how conveniently and efficiently Isaiah wraps up his prophecy into a name which will at once arrest attention, this use of names may be illustrated: 1. In relation to *families*. We recall to mind loved relatives, or acts of kindness done to us, or persons whose heroic lives we admire, by giving to our children some significant name. 2. In relation to the *sale of articles*. The skill of the advertiser is shown in the discovery of some taking name, which will draw public attention to the article offered. 3. In relation to *science and invention*. The results of research and discovery do not become public property until they can be fixed in a name; even men's theorizings getting thus labelled for use. 4. In relation to *doctrines*. Statements of Divine revelation do not become public property until they get a name, which is a sort of handle, by which the ordinary mind may grasp them. By such illustrations the practical wisdom of Isaiah's act may be shown, and then the truth which he sought thus to keep before the minds of the people may be impressed, The staring name, calling the attention of all the passers-by, said plainly, "Trust God, not man." "Fear nobody but God; nothing but God." "His word is surely true: though you see it not, it is hurrying even now to its accomplishment." That name said, "Trust in the Lord for ever." "He maketh the wrath of man praise him, and restrains the remainder of wrath."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Jehovah like the waters of Shiloah.* The fountain of Siloam, at the mouth of the Tyropœan valley, and so at the roots of both Zion and Moriah, is fed with water which flows through a narrow subterranean conduit from the "Pool of the Virgin." The point of the comparison presented by Isaiah cannot be better stated than in the following passage: "These waters of Shiloah, the sacred waters that came forth from the holy mountain, seemed poor and ignoble in comparison with the Abana and Pharpar of Syria, or the Jordan of Ephraim; how much more, then, with the Euphrates and Tigris! Calm and tranquil faith in the prophetic word which God sent them, in the gently flowing current of his providential dealings (springing out of the depths of his eternal wisdom and goodness),—this was not to their mind. They must have something that appealed to eye and ear, that gratified the fancy with its ambitious cravings" (Dr. Kay). Henderson applies the figure of the text to the house of David, but Cheyne properly argues that it is better to take the phrase as symbolizing the temple, and its almighty and gracious Lord; and he remarks that the figure is not an unfamiliar one. The psalmist says (Ps. xlvi. 4, 5), "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God . . . . God is in the midst of her." And Jeremiah speaks of the people having "forsaken the Lord, the Fountain of living waters" (Jer. xvi. 13). Taking these waters of Shiloah as the figure for Jehovah, they may be shown to illustrate—

I. THE GENTLENESS OF JEHOVAH. His kingdom "cometh not with observation." There is no cry, no lifting up of voice. He never rolleth like a desolating flood, save

in times of special judgment. He bubbleth gently as a fountain; and those who read their lives aright learn to say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." This characteristic comes out strongly in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was a gentle persuasion of truth, and a gentle example of righteousness. And still it is true that the regenerative force, in individual life and in society, "flows softly," like the waters of Shiloah.

II. THE CONSTANCY OF JEHOVAH. A fountain is fed from unfailing sources; it is always flowing, ready with its supplies at all times; no enemies can limit it or cut it off; in the secret places of the earth it has its storehouse, and it is ready with its help for every time of need. These suggest what God ever has been and is to his people. We have never to search for him; he is always here. We have never to force him; he is always ready—"A very present Help;" "A Refuge and Strength."

III. THE SUITABILITY OF JEHOVAH. This may not be the best term for the thought, which is, that the perennial fountain, at constant command, was better adapted to the circumstances of Judah than the river of Euphrates, which, if turned towards them, could only rush over them in desolating flood. Jehovah was more precisely adapted to their conditions. He could more fittingly meet their demands than any "arm of flesh," however strong it might seem to be. The thought may be enlarged upon under the guidance of the following passage (2 Cor. ix. 8): "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

IV. THE SUFFICIENCY OF JEHOVAH. The fountain flows on, day and night, pouring forth its fulness of blessing; whosoever will may drink and live. We are never "straitened in God." He can do abundantly for us, above all that we ask or think. Judah could only be dissatisfied with Jehovah because they did not prove his faithfulness and mercy; they did not cast themselves upon him. "Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Advance to show how this figure of the waters of Shiloah gained new form in the teachings of the Lord Jesus, who said, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Immanuel's land.* The figure used in this text is that of an overflowing river, sweeping along in desolating flood, and the great stretches of water, covering the cultivated lands on either side of the stream, are poetically likened to the outspread wings of a flying bird. The first reference of the expression, "Thy land, O Immanuel," may be to the prophetic child that was to be born in the land (ch. vii. 14). The distant reference may be to the coming of the Lord Jesus, as Immanuel, to the land of Judah, or rather of Canaan. But probably the name should be translated, and used as a succinct description of Palestine. This is its great and characteristic peculiarity; it is the "God with us" land. This may be illustrated, and the lesson from it enforced, under the following divisions.

I. IT IS THE LAND PREPARED FOR IMMANUEL. It was selected, and other countries were set in relation to it, so that it might be the "God with us," land, in which a special manifestation and relationship of God might be tried, in the face of the whole world. The country was remarkably *isolated* geographically. And it was as remarkably *centred*. These corrected each other. Israel had the best opportunities for preserving the great truths of the unity and spirituality of God which were entrusted to it. And at the same time it was set in the "eye of the world," so that all nations could watch the singular experiment of the theocracy.

II. IT IS THE LAND HONOURED BY THE ABIDING OF IMMANUEL. That direct and sensible presence of God which was the condition of the covenant was indicated by the Shechinah-symbol in tabernacle and temple. The glory of Israel wandering was *God present.* The glory of Israel settled was *God abiding and ruling.* The presence of God with us, as we know it, is Christ, the Temple-body, apprehended by our senses; and the Holy Ghost, the Temple-spirit, apprehended as witnessing and working within us.

III. IT IS THE LAND THAT MUST BE WORTHY OF IMMANUEL. It was the fundamental

idea of Judaism that the land was *holy*, because God walked to and fro in it; and, therefore, the people must be holy. And still this is the persuasion, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The figure may stand for the land of *each man's life*. That ought to be a "God with us" land.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*God's twofold relations with men.* To some, a "Sanctuary;" to others, a "Rock of offence." For the Christian form of the same truth, comp. 2 Cor. ii. 1, 6, "To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" God is to men as men are to him (see Ps. xviii. 25, 26). But is this saying anything strange? Surely it is the secret of good motherhood and fatherhood. They who order their households well are wisely responsive to the various states of the children, adapting and adjusting conduct to the dispositions and circumstances of each member of the home. No skilful parent treats all the children alike, and differing modes of treatment are no indications of varying degrees of love. He who loves us all must deal with each upon his perfect understanding of each one. He must be, he had better be, a "Rock of offence" to some. To the trustful child he can be a "Sanctuary;" but to the wilful child he must be a Severity. His dealings will, at first, cause offence. There is a very deep and searching truth indicated here, which may be illustrated from God's dealings with his people, and with individuals from among his people, through all the ages. It is that a *man may compel God to be otherwise towards him than he would be.* The passage which clearly states this, and will be a key to many other passages and illustrations, is the following: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God" (Ezek. xviii. 23). It is difficult to realize, but it is not beyond belief, that the same infinite goodness makes God both a "Sanctuary" and a "Rock of offence." In very grave measures—sometimes we feel in overwhelming measures—the responsibilities of our life-issues, and even the character of Divine relations with us, rests upon ourselves. After the wilful ones, hurrying to their doom, God, hastening, pleads thus: "Why will ye die? O house of Israel, why will ye die?"—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The hiding of God's face.* Jehovah is here spoken of as "the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob;" and Jeremiah uses a similar figure in one of his prayers: "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lam. iii. 44). Aside from the historical associations of the text, the expression itself is a suggestive one, and may be made the basis of meditation. Whatever may be the fact concerning God, this at least is the fact of the pious man's experience—it *feels to him* as if God had hidden his face and covered himself with a cloud. Two thoughts are suggested by the figure.

I. THE TWILIGHT GLOOM OF THE CHRISTIAN OFTEN ARISES FROM THE SENSE OF CHANGE IN HIMSELF. There are more twilight-times than night-times in the circle of the year, and in the circle of a religious life. Isaac Taylor reminds us that, in a whole year, there are only two or three absolutely dark nights. Nature gets a great blessing out of those two or three, but could not bear more. And in a religious life there are many things large enough to dim the rays of hope, and cast long and dark shadows over the spirit, but very few things strong enough to blot out the sun and stars, and make a midnight for the soul. Now, we need to see clearly that the gloom of spirit we feel usually comes from changes *in ourselves.* We are so ready to settle our twilight glooms upon God, as though in his sovereignty he had thus dealt with us; and then we fail to see our own mistakes, and we make no efforts to remedy the evils which are the immediate occasion of our fears. 1. Much inward trouble comes from the *state of our bodies.* The action and reaction of body and mind are exceedingly subtle. 2. Much of our inward distress comes from *unwatchfulness.* We may easily pass through most important changes of circumstances unheedingly. We often are in new circumstances before we are at all prepared for them, and then their influence may prove depressing or overwhelming. Life is to be for us all a succession of surprises, and yet we are never to be taken unawares. Our bodily weakness, our unwatchfulness, our indulgence in sin, hides God's face from us by putting a cloud across it. It is hidden, but we must see that we ourselves are the occasion and cause of the hiding. It lies with us to get the cloud away.

II. THE MIDNIGHT GLOOM OF THE CHRISTIAN OFTEN ARISES FROM THE IDEA OF CHANGE IN GOD. Christian joy comes from a clear consciousness of the Divine nearness—"the face of God shining upon his servant." Christian woe comes when God seems to be afar off, hidden; it is as though the sun had passed in behind a cloud; the face that made heaven for us shows frowns. It may well be called midnight darkness when the soul has conceived the idea of changed relations in God. One or two comforting considerations may be dwelt on. 1. Change in God only comes as a consequence of change in the Christian. He is the unchangeable One; but in his rule he adjusts relations to those whom he would bless. To the sinner, he is a God of holy indignations. To the penitent, he is a God of saving mercies. To the earth-child, trying to live a godly life, he is a watching, guiding Father. To the Christian in trouble or pain, he is a tender, comforting Mother. He is not varying and uncertain; that would make him untrustworthy. He is adapting himself to us, so that if ever God seems to have changed towards us, we may be quite sure that the truth is we have changed towards him. If he hides himself, there must be some cherished wrong in us, as certainly as there was in the Israel of Isaiah's times. 2. Change in God is never change in his feelings, only in sensible relations. It should be settled, as one of our immovable truths, that there can be no real change in God, whatever appearances we may discern. Look long with our human eyes, and the firmest steeple will seem to be trembling and tottering to a fall; but the trembling is only in our vision. For a "little moment God may hide his face from you, but with great lovingkindness he will gather you." Change in sensible relations there may be. The joy of his love we may lose, not his love. The impulse of his grace we may lose, not the grace. The comfort of his presence we may lose, not the presence. It should, indeed, humble us that we may lose so much, but even in our soul's midnight hours we need not despair. As the child in the dark whispers "Father!" and is at peace when the father-arms press closer, so we, in the night, may find that if our Father's face is hidden, our Father himself is near.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Man every way God's instrument.* "Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and for omens in Israel from Jehovah Sabaoth, who dwelleth on Mount Zion" (Cheyne's translation). The thought here is very simple and very familiar, and no more than the statement of divisions, for the ordering of thought, can be necessary. Take St. Paul's figure of the "living sacrifice," as including body, soul, spirit, and relationships, all consecrated to God's service, and illustrate—

I. How a man's body may be consecrated to God.
II. How a man's health may be consecrated to God.
III. How a man's gifts may be consecrated to God.
IV. How a man's possessions may be consecrated to God.
V. How a man's personal friendships may be consecrated to God.
VI. How a man's family life may be consecrated to God.
VII. How a man's social influences may be consecrated to God.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The standard of truth and morals.* This text is not merely a Divine declaration. It rests upon the great fact that man can never be satisfied until he gets a standard of truth and duty outside of and apart from himself. No man anywhere can reach an intelligent satisfaction by becoming wholly a law unto himself. The moral sense in every man is vitiated, and its attestations are uncertain. The testimony of conscience is variable; it is not now always prompt, decided, and faithful in its judgments. It may appear at first sight as if there were many men who are living entirely according to their own will, following wholly the "devices and desires of their own hearts." But, if we look a little deeper, we shall find that they are all striving after conformity to some standard, bad or good, that is outside them. It is often custom, etiquette, society, the moral level of the age in which they happen to live. There are common fallacies which tone the lives of some, and multitudes are content to make a standard of the teachings of an authoritative priesthood. Even the hermit, dwelling apart, separated from the associations of his fellow-men, cannot be satisfied with his own standard; he even finds an ideal outside himself, in the life, endurance,

and suffering of some more saintly fellow-creature. God has graciously considered this common human necessity. He has not left his creatures to search for such a standard in their blindness. In every age, in forms and terms such as at the time they could understand, God has given models of truth and duty. He has never left men to mere abstract speculations; in some kind of ordinarily understood human teaching, by word, or act, or example, God has always set forth a standard; and so in every age he can make his appeal and say, "To the Law and to the testimony." In the first ages of the world the standard was given in *personal characters*, such as Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham. To this was by-and-by added the revelation of the Divine will in *written and spoken words*, for which advancing civilization and culture prepared men. At the very beginning, as the written revelation could not get into the hands and use of all men, it was presented for a time in the pictures of an elaborate ceremonial. Later on it was expressed in the free speech of prophets and teachers, and then the pictured ceremonials might fade away. At the very last the Divine standard of truth and morals for humanity was exhibited, in its completeness and perfection, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth, duty, virtue, were here among men. Christ was the perfect realization of God's idea of a moral being. The standard man is not on earth now, but his record remains. That record is in all our hands; it is as if we lived our daily life in the presence of the Divine ideal. We have in our Bible God's great rule of truth and duty. Consciously or unconsciously we do test every action by our standard; all the questions arising in connection with our moral life are brought to the test of the "Law and the testimony."

I. THE BIBLE EXERTS ITS MORAL FORCE UPON US BY THE TRUTHS WHICH IT CONTAINS AND REVEALS. These truths test all received opinions. Each man really is according to his opinions and beliefs; the whole temper and conduct are toned by the truths received. If they are according to the "Law and testimony," their fruit will be righteousness and mercy. The Bible does not, indeed, contain any formulated system of theology or of morals, but it does contain such an harmonious setting forth of all necessary truth as, in fact, constitutes a complete system both of doctrine and of duty. The Bible has its own sphere; within this it is infallible. It is the sphere of *character*; it is no standard of appeal for geographers, or arithmeticians, or astronomers, or ethnologists, or literati, or philosophers. For all such the Bible is a book of the age in which it was written, and it embodies the thought which was the common property of the men of the time. Man does not want a written revelation of science, for he has not lost the key which enables him to unlock its mysteries for himself. Man does need a written revelation of standard morals, because he flung away his key in Eden, and, with ages of painful searching, he has failed to find it again.

II. THE BIBLE EXERTS ITS MORAL FORCE BY THE PRINCIPLES WHICH IT EMBODIES. The structure of the Bible compels us to search out its principles. They do not lie on the surface, like seeds on beaten paths, ready for every passing bird to pick up. They are given to us embodied in history, illustrated in incidents of individual lives, and in phases of personal experience. Nothing seems to be said in the New Testament about ecclesiastical politics, or orders of Church government; but there are to be found great principles, which can be wisely adapted in their practical expression to the varying conditions of men in different ages. There are no announcements concerning social manners; there is nothing taught in a direct way concerning monarchy or slavery, for instance; but the Bible gives principles which, gradually gaining sway over the minds of men, constitutionally attemper monarchy, and will after a while banish slavery from the earth. A principle is more searching than a maxim. Men may think they could have done better with a Bible like the books of Confucius, full of maxims, shaping into order the whole minutiæ of life. Such a Bible could only make automata, not living men. God gives a Bible full of quick effective principles; these, getting into the soul, are the seeds whence come flowerings and fruitings of righteousness. A maxim will guide us in one case, a principle will put us right in ten thousand. Circumstances may always limit the application of an express commandment; a principle fits and shapes itself to every new occasion, as the rising tide into every bay and nook and creek of the winding stream.

III. THE BIBLE EXERTS ITS MORAL FORCE BY THE EXAMPLE WHICH IT PRESENTS. Its men, except the Lord Christ, are fallible, struggling men. Their wrong-doing is

never covered over. You never get the impression of a character painted rose-colour. The moral quality of a man's action is never confused. Evil is always evil. Wrong-doing in a good man is only worse wrong-doing in view of his goodness; and it is never palliated. There is found in the Bible virtue to incite us and evil to warn us; a great "cloud of witnesses" putting to shame our meaner lives. But the great standard example is the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He "tries every man that cometh into the world." The final test of moral conduct for us all is the Lord Jesus Christ. Full acceptance with God can come only from being perfectly like Christ. And if the suggestion makes us feel that we are far down below him, only just climbing the first ridge of the mountain-side, this is our encouraging assurance, "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Vers. 1—7.—THE TROUBLES OF ISRAEL SHALL END THROUGH THE BIRTH OF A MARVELLOUS CHILD. The section of the prophecy commencing with ch. vii. 1 terminates in this glorious burst of glad and gracious promise. The gist of the whole section is: "Israel shall not suffer from Pekah and Rezin; her oppressors shall be Assyria and Egypt, more especially the former; Assyria shall overwhelm her, crush her, lay her low; she shall remain awhile in gloom and darkness; but at length the darkness shall be dispelled; a 'great light' shall shine forth, first in the north, then over all the land; 'the rod of the oppressor' shall be broken; a Child shall be born, who shall bear marvellous names, and shall rule over the full kingdom of David in justice and righteousness for ever." God has spoken, and God will perform this.

Ver. 1.—**Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when,** etc. Our translators have misconceived the construction, and consequently missed the sense. The first two clauses, which they run together, are entirely separate and distinct. Translate, *Nevertheless there shall be no (more) darkness to her who was in affliction. As at the former time he brought contempt upon the land of Zebulon,* etc. Contempt was brought on the more northern part of the Holy Land, first when it was overrun and ravaged by the Syrians (1 Kings xv. 20) under Benhadad, and more recently when it bore the brunt of the Assyrian attack (2 Kings xv. 29) under Tiglath-Pileser. **At the first . . . and afterward**; rather, *at the former time . . . in the latter time.* The contrast is between two periods of Israel's history, the existing period and the Messianic. **And afterward did more grievously afflict her. This is** altogether wrong. Translate, *So in the latter time he hath brought honour on the way of the sea.* The perfect is a "prophetic perfect," and the reference is to the honour that would be done to the northern districts, "the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali," by the Messiah dwelling there (comp. Matt. iv. 14—16). **The way of the sea**; *i.e.* the district about the sea of Tiberias, called "the sea of Kinnereth" (equivalent to "Gennesareth") in Numb. xxxiv. 11, and "the sea of Galilee" in John. vi. 1. **Beyond Jordan**; *i.e.* the tract east of the sea and of the upper Jordan, where the five thousand were fed, and where our Lord was transfigured. **Galilee of the nations.** The name "Galilee" seems to have been given to the outlying circuit, or zone, on the north, which was debatable ground between the Israelites and their neighbours (see 1 Kings ix. 10; Josh. xx. 7; xxi. 32). The word means "circuit," or "ring." Though claimed as theirs by the Israelites, it was largely peopled by "Gentiles."

Ver. 2.—**The people that walked in darkness** (comp. ch. viii. 22). All the world was "in darkness" when Christ came; but here the Jews especially seem to be intended. It was truly a dark time with them when Christ came (see Döllinger's 'Judenthum and Heidenthum,' vol. ii. pp. 301—335). **Have seen**; rather, *saw.* The "prophetic" preterite is used throughout the whole passage. **A great light.** "The Light of the world," "the Sun of righteousness," "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," first broke on man in that northern tract "by the way of the sea," when Jesus came forward to teach and to preach in "Galilee of the Gentiles." For thirty years he had dwelt at Nazareth, in Zebulon. There he had first come forward to teach in a synagogue (Luke iv. 16—21); in Galilee he had done his first miracles (John ii. 11; iv. 54); at Capernaum, "upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim," he commenced his preaching of repentance (Matt. iv. 13—17). The "light" first streamed forth in this quarter,

glorifying the region on which contempt had long been poured.

Ver. 3.—**Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy.** Dr. Kay defends this reading, and supposes a contrast of time between this clause and the next; he renders, "Thou *didst* multiply the nation" (*i.e.* in the days of Solomon and again in those of Uzziah) "and not increase the joy; *but now*," etc. The objection is that the verbs are all in the same tense, the simple preterite, and that there is nothing in the original corresponding to "but now." Almost all other recent commentators accept the solution offered by the Masoretic reading (לֹא for לוֹ), which makes the passage simple and easy: "Thou hast multiplied the nation; its joy thou hast increased; they joy before thee," etc. (So many Hebrew manuscripts, the Alexandrine Septuagint, the Syriac, Gesenius, Knobel, Cheyne, etc.) **According to the joy in harvest.** "The joy in harvest" was to the Jews the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles, or Ingathering (Exod. xxiii. 16), held when the last fruits were brought in. But the prophet is perhaps taking a wider view, and thinking of the many harvest festivals prevailing throughout Western Asia, all of them originating in gratitude to the Giver of all good, and many of them comprising manifestations of joy more jubilant than those habitual to his sedater countrymen.

Ver. 4.—**Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden,** etc. The coming of the Messiah sets the Israelites free, removes the yoke from off their neck, breaks the rod wherewith their shoulders were beaten, delivers them from bondage into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." Not, however, in an earthly sense, since the Messiah's kingdom was not of this world. The "yoke" is that of sin, the "oppressor" is that prince of darkness, who had well-nigh brought all mankind under his dominion when Christ came. **His oppressor**; literally, *his taskmaster*—the same word which is used of the Egyptian taskmasters in Exod. v. 6. **As in the day of Midian.** The "day of Midian" is probably the time of Israel's deliverance from the Midianite oppression by Gideon (Judg. vii. 19—25). The special characteristic of the deliverance was, as Dr. Kay well observes, "that it was accomplished without military prowess by a small body of men selected out of Israel, selected expressly in order that Israel might not vaunt itself against the Lord, saying, My own hand hath saved me (Judg. vii. 2)."

Ver. 5.—**For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise**; rather, *for all the armour of him that armeth noisily* (Knobel, Vance Smith); or, perhaps, "every hoof of him that trampeth noisily" (Gesenius, Cheyne). The noun and participle, which are cognate words, occur only in this passage. **And garments,** etc. Translate, *And every garment that is rolled in blood, shall be for burning, even fuel for fire.* All military accoutrements shall be committed to the flames, that the reign of peace and justice may commence (comp. ch. ii. 4; Ps. xlvi. 9).

Ver. 6.—**Unto us a child is born** (comp. ch. vii. 14—16, where the promise of "a child," "a son," is first made—a child who was, like this Child, to be "God with us"). **The government shall be upon his shoulder.** The word translated "government" (*misrah*) occurs only here and in ver. 7. It is probably to be connected with *sar*, "prince," and Isra-el. Government was regarded as a burden, to be borne on the back or shoulders, and was sometimes symbolized by a key laid upon the shoulder (ch. xxii. 22). Vizier means "burdened." The Latin writers often speak of the civil power as borne on the shoulders of magistrates (Cic., 'Orat. pro Flacc.,' § 94; Plin., 'Paneg.,' § 10). As God, our Lord governed all things from the beginning; as man, he set up a "kingdom"—which he still governs—upon the earth. **His name shall be called.** It is perhaps not very important whether we view what follows as one name or several. Isaiah does not really mean that the "Child" should bear *as* a name, or names, any of the expressions, but only that they should be truly applicable to him. **Wonderful, Counsellor.** It has been proposed to unite these two expressions and translate, "Wondrous Counsellor" (compare "wonderful in counsel," ch. xxviii. 29). But Dr. Kay is probably right in saying that, if this had been the meaning, it would have been expressed differently. Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Delitzsch, and Vance Smith agree with Dr. Kay in taking the words separately. *Wonderful.* The Messiah would be "wonderful" in his nature as God-Man; in his teaching, which "astonished" those who heard it (Matt. vii. 28); in his doings (ch. xxv. 1); in the circumstances of his birth and death; in his resurrection, and in his ascension. "Wonder" would be the first sentiment which his manifestation would provoke, and hence this descriptive epithet is placed first. As the Word, as Wisdom itself, as he who says, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am Understanding" (Prov. viii. 14), he is well named "Counsellor." None will ever seek his counsel in vain, much less repent of following it. **The mighty God**; rather, perhaps, *Mighty God*; but the difference is not great, since *El*, God, contains within itself the notion of singularity, which is given to ordinary nouns by the article. The term *El*, God, had been previously applied to the Messiah

only in Ps. xlv. 6. It denotes in Isaiah always (as Mr. Cheyne observes) "divinity in an absolute sense; it is never used hyperbolically or metaphorically." **The Everlasting Father**; rather, *Everlasting* or *Eternal Father*. But here, again, there is a singularity in the idea, which makes the omission of the article unimportant; for how could there be more than *one* Everlasting Father, *one* Creator, Preserver, Protector of mankind who was absolutely eternal? If the term "Father," applied to our Lord, grates on our ears, we must remember that the distinction of Persons in the Godhead had not yet been revealed. **The Prince of Peace**; literally, *Prince of Peace*. A "Prince of Peace" had been long shadowed forth, as in Melchizedek, "King of Salem," *i.e.* "of Peace;" and again in Solomon, "the peaceful one;" and Isaiah himself had already prophesied the peacefulness of the Messiah's kingdom (ch. ii. 4). Compare the song of the angels at our Lord's birth (Luke ii. 14). If the peacefulness has not yet very clearly shown itself, the reason would seem to be that our Lord's kingdom has yet to come into the hearts of most men.

Ver. 7.—**Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.** The Messiah's kingdom shall ever increase more and more; there shall be no limits to it; ultimately it shall fill the world (comp. Matt. xxviii. 18, 19). The continual spread of Christianity tends to the accomplishment of this prophecy. **Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom.** That the Messiah is to sit on the throne of David, suggests, but does not absolutely imply, his Davidic descent. That descent is, however, announced with sufficient clearness in ch. xi. 1, 10. **To order it, and to establish it.** A *gradual* establishment of the kingdom would seem to be implied, such as is taught also in the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. **From henceforth even for ever.** The kingdom is to be both universal in respect of extent (see the first note on the verse), and in respect of duration eternal. **The zeal**; or, *jealousy*. God's jealousy of his own honour, which is bound up with the prosperity and final triumph of his people over all their enemies, will assure the performance of all that is here prophesied.

Vers. 8—21.—THE PROPHET RETURNS TO THREATS AND WARNINGS, ADDRESSED CHIEFLY TO THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. The remainder of this chapter, together with the first four verses of the next, seems to have formed originally a distinct and separate prophecy. The passage is a poem in four stanzas, with the same refrain at the end of each: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." A somewhat early date has been assigned to the prophecy, as, for instance, "some period in the reign of Jotham" (Cheyne); but the internal evidence only proves that it was written before the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians.

Ver. 8.—**Jacob . . . Israel.** These words do not show that the prophecy is directed against the kingdom of Israel only. "Jacob" designates Judah rather than Israel in ch. ii. 3, 5, 6; and the expression, "both the houses of Israel," in ch. viii. 14, shows that the term "Israel" embraces both kingdoms. The distinctive names by which Isaiah ordinarily designates the northern kingdom are "Ephraim" and "Samaria."

Ver. 9.—**Even Ephraim**; rather, *especially Ephraim*. The prophecy is no doubt *mainly* directed against the northern kingdom. **That say in the pride and stoutness of heart**; rather, *in the pride and stoutness of heart, wherein they say*.

Ver. 10.—**The bricks are fallen down, etc.**; *i.e.* we have suffered a moderate damage, but we will more than make up for it; all our losses we will replace with something better. Bricks were the ordinary material for the poorer class of houses in Palestine; stone was reserved for the dwellings of the rich and great (Amos v. 11). Sycomore wood was the commonest sort of timber, cedar the scarcest and most precious, having to be imported from Phœnicia (1 Kings v. 6; 2 Chron. ii. 3; Ezra iii. 7). (On the contrast between cedar and sycomore wood, comp. 2 Chron. i. 15.) **Cut down.** The Israelites probably alluded to damage done by Tiglath-Pileser in his first invasion. The Assyrians were in the habit of actually cutting down trees in foreign countries, in order to injure and weaken them; but the present passage is, perhaps, rather intended to be figurative.

Ver. 11.—**Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him.** "Against him" means "against Ephraim," or the kingdom of Israel. "The adversaries of Rezin" could only be the Assyrians; but these seem precluded by the next verse, which mentions only "Syrians" and Philistines." Hence many critics accept the variant reading of several manuscripts — *sarey* for *tsarey*—which gives the sense of "the *princes* of Rezin" (so Lowth, Ewald, Houbigant, Weir, Cheyne).

Ver. 12.—**The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind**; or, *the Syrians from the east, and the Philistines from the west*. The Semitic races regarded the world as looking to the rising sun, and used for the east the preposition signifying "in front,"

for the west that signifying "behind." Syria seems to have been hostile to Samaria until the league was formed between Rezin and Pekah, and may have become hostile again after Pekah's death (2 Chron. xxviii. 23). We read of a Philistine invasion of Judah in Chronicles (2 Chron. xxviii. 18), but not of their attacking Israel. Still, it was as easy for them to attack the one as the other. They abutted on the territory of Israel towards the south-west, as Syria did towards the north-east. **For all this his anger is not turned away**; since Israel continued impenitent. It would have ceased had they repented and turned to God (see ver. 13). **His hand is stretched out**; not to save, but to smite.

Ver. 13.—**The people.** The people of Israel, as distinct from the people of Judah. The particular judgment announced in vers. 11, 12 is clearly to fall on them. **Neither do they seek the Lord of hosts.** Israel had set itself to seek after Baal from the time of Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 31). The reform of Jehu (2 Kings x. 28) had gone but skin-deep. Baal was still "sought to," rather than Jehovah, when the final judgment came (2 Kings xvii. 16; Hos. ii. 13).

Ver. 14.—**Head and tail, branch and rush**; *i.e.* the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest. The "branch" intended is the "palm branch," at once lofty in position and the most glorious form of vegetable life (Ps. xcii. 12; Cant. vii. 7, 8, etc.); the "rush" is the simple "sedge" that grows, not only low on the ground, but in the "mire" (Job viii. 11). The same expression occurs again in ch. xix. 15.

Ver. 15.—Some suppose this verse to be a gloss, or marginal note, which has crept into the text; but it is too pointed and sarcastic for a mere gloss. There is no reason to doubt its being Isaiah's. Having spoken of "the tail," he takes the opportunity of lashing the false prophet, who claimed to be among the "honourable," but was really the lowest of the low, worse than his dupes, the true "tail" (comp. ch. xxviii. 7; xxix. 10; xxx. 10).

Ver. 16.—**The leaders of this people cause them to err** (comp. ch. iii. 12). Both the peoples were led into idolatry by their rulers, but Israel especially. Jeroboam, the first king, introduced the calf-worship, and his successors from first to last persisted in his sin. Ahab added the still grosser idolatry of Baal. Those who held high position under the kings were equally bad examples to the people (see above, ch. i. 23). **Are destroyed.** First, morally corrupted and debased, then physically given over to destruction—slaughtered by Philistines, Syrians, and Assyrians.

Ver. 17.—**The Lord shall have no joy in their young men.** "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" (Ps. cxlvii. 11). He can have no joy or delight in evil-doers, or idolaters, or in those whose speech is profanity. **Neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows.** The widow and the orphan are objects of God's tenderest love and compassion (Exod. xxii. 22; Deut. x. 18; xiv. 29; ch. i. 17, etc.); but when the wickedness of a land provokes him to send any or e of his "four sore judgments" upon it, the widow and the fatherless must suffer with the other inhabitants. God pities them, doubtless, but his justice and his righteous anger force him to restrain his pity, and carry out his judgment in spite of it. **Every one is an hypocrite**; or, *corrupt*; compare, "They are *all* gone aside, they are *all together* become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, *not one*" (Ps. xiv. 3). A certain allowance must be made for the natural hyperbole of strong feeling. **Every mouth speaketh folly.** The word translated here (and generally) "folly" is rendered "villany" in ch. xxxii. 6 and Jer. xxix. 23. Its proper meaning seems to be "lewdness" or "profligacy."

Ver. 18.—**Wickedness burneth as the fire**; *i.e.* the contagion of wickedness overspreads a whole nation in the same rapid way that fire spreads over a field of stubble or a forest. **They shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke**; rather, *they—i.e.* the forest thickets—*shall be whirled upward with the uplifting of smoke.* The burning thickets shall mount up with the volumes of smoke into the air, and hang there as a murky but lurid pall. The flames of wickedness give no light to a land, but plunge it in heavy, hopeless gloom.

Ver. 19.—**Is the land darkened**; rather, *burnt up* (*συγκέκαυται*, LXX.). The root used occurs in Arabic in this sense. It is not used elsewhere in Scripture. **The people shall be as the fuel of the fire.** Though the general ravage, devastation, and desolation of the land, with its buildings, its trees, and its other vegetable products, is included in the image of the fire devouring the thorny brakes and tangled thickets of a dense forest, yet the threat is intended still more against the Israelite *people*, who were the true "fuel of the fire," since the ravage would go on until the land should be depopulated. **No man shall spare his brother.** We have here a new feature. Not only shall foreign enemies—Syrians and Philistines—devour Israel, but the plague of civil war will also be let loose upon them (comp. ver. 21, and see 2 Kings xv. 30, where we find that Pekah fell a victim to a conspiracy headed by Hoshea).

Ver. 20.—**He shall snatch**; rather, *one*

shall devour. A man, *i.e.*, shall plunder and ravage in one quarter, and yet not be satisfied; then he shall do the same in another, and still desire more. "Increase of appetite shall grow by what it feeds on." There shall be no sense of satiety anywhere. **The flesh of his own arm.** In a civil war, or a time of anarchy, each man is always "eating the flesh of his own arm"—*i.e.* injuring his neighbour, who is his own natural protector and defender.

Ver. 21.—**Manasseh, Ephraim.** These two are mentioned as the two principal tribes of the northern kingdom (comp. 1 Chron. ix. 3; 2 Chron. xxx. 1, 10, 18; xxxi. 1; xxxiv. 9). It is not to be supposed that civil discord was confined to them. Probably there was a general disorganization. Still, all the tribes would at any time willingly unite "together against Judah" (see 2 Kings xv. 37; 2 Chron. xxviii. 6—8).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*The significancy of the names of Christ.* Five names of the Redeemer are here declared by Isaiah, in addition to the name given him in ch. vii.—viii., viz. Immanuel. Names of Christ are always worthy of the deepest and most attentive consideration, for each reveals some portion of his nature, each exhibits some aspect of him, so to speak, which is distinct from other aspects; and it is only by meditating upon all, that we approximate to a full and complete conception of his manifold excellences. Very specially worthy of consideration are the five names here put forth, which may be viewed either separately or in their connection. And first separately—

I. THE NAME OF "WONDERFUL." 1. Wonderful is the Son in his eternal relation to the Almighty Father, an unchanging relation of mutual love and tenderness, differenced by the fact of derivation, and the sense on the one hand of bestowal, and on the other of acceptance and dependence. Wonderful, wholly transcending our utmost reach of thought, is that eternity of pre-existence which he enjoyed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, not only before the world was, but before it had pleased the Divine Nature to bring into existence any other being besides itself. 2. Wonderful, again, is he in that repeated act of creation, so clearly assigned to him (John i. 31; Heb. i. 2), whereby he brought out of nothing (Heb. xi. 3) the entire existing universe—angels and archangels, principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim; matter arranged and unarranged; sun, moon, stars, planets, satellites, nebulæ; man, animals; —all of them "the work of his hands," created by him out of non-existence. 3. Even more wonderful is he in his dealings with the children of men—in his patience with them, his regard for them, his mediatorial office towards them, his inward revelation of himself to them, his constant presence with them, his sacramental communication of himself to them, all unworthy as they are. 4. Wonderful is he in his life on earth, which even unbelievers cannot but admire; wonderful in his triumph over death and the grave; wonderful in his ascension into heaven in the sight of men; wonderful in his appearances to St. Paul and St. Stephen; wonderful in the might wherewith he still sustains his Church, so that even the very "gates of hell" cannot prevail against it.

II. THE NAME OF "COUNSELLOR." As the "Logos," or "Reason," no less than the "Word" of God, the Son was identified by the ancient Fathers with the "Wisdom" of the Book of Proverbs, of whom it is said, "I Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge. . . . *Counsel* is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding. . . . The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. viii. 12—30). He was thus, in some sort, the Counsellor of the Triune Synod which presided over the world and directed all its affairs. But, further, he was the Counsellor of man. The Logos was "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). Our natural reason and conscience come from him, for he has implanted them in us, to counsel us aright. All revealed light is also from him, for he is the Word and the Truth. He counsels us from within, by the inward monitor who tells us what is right; he counsels us from without, by his apostles, his evangelists, his Church, his living ministers. Do we lack wisdom generally? let us ask of him, and he will pour light

into our souls. Do we need counsel on any special matter? let us take it to him, and he will show us the wisest and best course.

III. THE NAME OF "MIGHTY GOD." The Son of God is himself God, and if God, then certainly "mighty"—nay, "almighty." What the Messiah was to do, could be done by none less than God. He was to redeem mankind; he was to vanquish death and sin; he was to triumph over Satan; he was to be a meritorious Sacrifice. "God with us" had already been declared to be one of his names (ch. vii. 14). Now he is announced as "God the Mighty One." It is to the last degree uncritical to compare this assignment of so august a name, coming from the mouth of an intense theist, with the ascription of Divine titles to the Egyptian kings by themselves, or by their subjects, when both king and subjects were polytheists. Isaiah could not have intended to call a mere man "God;" he must have recognized, as David had done (Ps. xlv. 6), that the Messiah would be more than man, would in some way or other be a partaker of the Divine nature. Jeremiah did the same when he announced the Messiah as "Jehovah our Righteousness." The prophets may not have been aware of the doctrine of the Trinity, but they could conceive an incarnation of God. The name of "Mighty God" in Isaiah's list must be accepted as a distinct announcement of the true Divinity of the Messiah, just as the words "child" and "son," which had been previously applied to him (ver. 6), were announcements of his true humanity.

IV. THE NAME OF "EVERLASTING FATHER." When the Messiah is called a "Father," we must understand the word as meaning primarily "Protector." So Job was a "father to the poor" (Job xxix. 16), and Eliakim a "father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (ch. xxii. 11). The idea of protection, however, implied in "Father" does not exhaust the connotation of the word. It contains also the notions of "Creator" and "Preserver," of one whom we are bound to love, honour, and obey. "Have we not all one father?" says Malachi. "Hath not one God *created* us?" "If I be a Father," says Jehovah by his mouth, "where is my *honour?*" The Messiah was to be "Father" in all these senses. As the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, he created man; as "God *with us*," he preserves him; as the typical Man, the Head of the redeemed human race, he will ever keep and protect him. The prophet calls him "Everlasting Father," first, to show that he is no mere human protector, like Job or Eliakim; but also, further, to indicate by an additional phrase his Divinity, since God alone is "everlasting," or "eternal." His people are assured by the epithet that he will never cease to be their Protector, will never desert them, or weary of interposing for them. No; "he ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii. 25). He is "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last" (Rev. i. 8). He "will not fail us, nor forsake us" (Deut. xxxi. 6).

V. THE NAME OF "PRINCE OF PEACE." So long as there is evil, there must be war between good and evil. The Messiah is "Prince of Peace," especially, because he comes to convert the world; to "turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;" to destroy sin, and "bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24). When there is universal righteousness, there will be universal peace. Certainly, the time is not yet come. The Prince of a peaceful kingdom, whose servants may not seek to advance his kingdom by violence, has not annihilated evil, has not swept all the wicked from the world. And so the fight goes on; evil men still stir up wars and tumults, and good men are forced to resist them. But the "Prince of Peace" shows his power and justifies his name, (1) in the peace that he introduces into the hearts that love him; (2) in the peace found wherever the Spirit of Christ prevails, as in pious households, in brotherhoods and sisterhoods, in assemblies of Christian men like our convocations, etc.; (3) in the *comparative* peace that obtains in Christian lands, the growing desire for peace and hatred of war, the readiness to resort to arbitration, and the like.

Taken in connection, the five names would seem to teach (1) the mysteriousness of Christ's nature, which lies at the very basis of Christianity, and upon which all else is built; (2) the wisdom of his teaching, which makes him our only safe "Counsellor;" (3) the power which he has, as "Mighty God," to accomplish all his designs in his own good time; (4) the love which leads him to exert this power continually in the protection of his Church; and (5) the peaceful condition to which he will in the end bring his Church, when its probation is accomplished and he comes to reign over it as

its visible King. The names begin in the past, advance to the present, and end in the far future. They first bespeak our reverence and awe, the foundations of religious feeling. They then call forth our trust, showing Christ to us all-wise, almighty. They end by eliciting our love towards him as a protecting "Father," who will at last conduct us to perfect peace.

Vers. 8—21.—*Persistent impenitence brings repeated chastisements.* One would naturally expect that so weak a creature as man, when chastised by the Divine anger, would readily and at once "humble himself under the almighty hand of God," accept the chastisement as deserved, and entreat for mercy and forgiveness. But, weak as he is, man is unwilling to acknowledge his weakness, and, faulty as he is, dislikes nothing so much as acknowledging his faults. God's judgments he will not allow to be judgments, but attributes them to any cause but God; as, for instance, (1) to his own mistakes; (2) to accident or chance; (3) to fate; (4) to some combination of circumstances not likely to recur. God brought upon Israel four great chastisements, placing intervals between them, so that after each they might have repented and turned to him, had they so willed. But they would not. These chastisements were—

I. THE ASSYRIAN INVASION UNDER TIGLATH-PILESER. This was a comparatively "light affliction," as God's earlier judgments commonly are. It fell, not on the whole land, but only on a portion—"the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali;" and it resulted in the loss, not of national life or national independence, but only of a province or two not very highly valued. "Galilee of the Gentiles" was overrun and annexed by Assyria; but Ephraim and Manasseh, the great tribes which formed the heart of the nation, were untouched. Still, the invasion was a warning which a wise nation would have taken to heart. When dismemberment begins, it is apt to be continued; each fresh act of spoliation is easier than the last. And the aggressor is encouraged by his success, and tempted to repeat his aggression. But Israel was not wise. She consoled herself by "pride and stoutness of heart," making light of her losses, and boasting that she would easily repair them (ver. 10). Her pride and impenitence provoked God to inflict a second chastisement.

II. THE COMBINED PHILISTINE AND SYRIAN ATTACK. Of this we know no more than what is told us in the present chapter. Attack was made "before" and "behind"—from the east and from the west. Jehovah "joined the enemies of Israel together" (ver. 11), and caused them to make a combined, or at any rate a simultaneous, invasion. Both enemies were formidable, and Israel was unable to meet either with her full force. Consequently they were successful, and "devoured Israel with open mouth." Could not this second chastisement arouse the nation from its mistaken feeling of security, and bring it to cast itself down before God? Alas! no. The people "turned not to him that had smitten them, neither did they seek the Lord of hosts" (ver. 13). The result was that a third chastisement fell.

III. THE INTERNAL ANARCHY AND DISTURBANCE. Hostility to the kindred tribe of Judah lay at the base of Israel's existence as a nation, and was cherished by statesmen as a patriotic feeling. But it was impossible to keep the feeling as closely confined as statesmen would have wished. Within Israel itself one tribe grew jealous of another; and, under the diminished strength of the central authority caused by the external troubles of the time, jealousy led on to open conflict, "no man sparing his brother" (ver. 19). As Rome perished by her own strength, when faction became arrayed against faction in the forum and the field, so it seems to have been with Israel. Internal quarrel supervened upon foreign attack; and the weakened state, when a fresh assault from without came, necessarily succumbed to it. Repentance, even at this advanced hour, might have caused God to avert the danger and turn the current of Assyrian conquest in some other direction; but once more, there was no submission, no sign of any change of heart. And at last the dread fiat went forth for Samaria's final destruction. The fourth and last chastisement was—

IV. THE CONQUEST OF SAMARIA, AND CARRYING AWAY OF ISRAEL INTO CAPTIVITY, BY THE ASSYRIANS UNDER SHALMANESER AND SARGON. The same instrument, Assyria, was employed for the first chastisement and the last. Shalmaneser, the successor of Tiglath-Pileser, towards the middle of his short reign, having "found conspiracy in Hoshea"—who had murdered Pekah and succeeded him—"came up

throughout all the land of Israel, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years" (2 Kings xvii. 5). At the end of the three years the city fell, about the same time (B.C. 722) that Sargon, having murdered Shalmaneser at Nineveh, caused himself to be proclaimed supreme ruler of the Assyrian empire. Sargon, following a recognized Assyrian practice, deported the principal part of the population, and settled it partly in Upper Mesopotamia, partly in the cities of Media (2 Kings xvii. 6). The life of the nation thus came to an end. God had borne with it for two centuries and a half—tried it, tested it, sent it prophets and seers (2 Kings xvii. 13), chastened it, corrected it; but all in vain. Notwithstanding all that he could do and did, "they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, and rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, and left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger" (2 Kings xvii. 14—17). Nothing, therefore, remained but to "remove them out of his sight"—to sweep them away with the besom of destruction.

The fate of Israel is a warning, primarily, to nations; but also, secondarily, to individuals. God lays his chastisements on them too, for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. If they resist and are impenitent, he follows up blow with blow. If they remain obdurate, he breaks their pride and crushes them.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Vision of future glory.* In bright contrast to the preceding gloomy outlook, bursts the enrapturing view of future glory on the prophet's soul.

I. COMPENSATION FOR PAST SUFFERING. Not for ever is the land to lie darkened. A great light of deliverance is to appear. The prophet's glance rests on the northern and eastern portions of the kingdom of Ephraim. They had been conquered by Assyria, and the people carried away captive (2 Kings xv. 29). But "as the former time brought shame to Zebulon and Naphtali, the latter also bringeth honour towards the sea, beyond the Jordan, towards the heathen-march." The depopulated land will bask in the sunshine of restored prosperity. Assembling "before Jehovah," *i.e.* in his sacred place, they will rejoice as at a harvest ingathering, or at a division of spoil after victory. For the Assyrian yoke will be broken, and crushing will be the defeat of the foes of the nation, like that of Midian in days of yore. Every trace of war and barbarity will be placed under a ban, and be destroyed by fire—the boot that had clanked on the heel of the foreign soldier, and the red battle-garment.

II. THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF PEACE. The pledge of its establishment is the promise of the wondrous Child. 1. *His names.* Not only Immanuel, *God with us*, is he to be called; but other names bespeak his attributes as a great Prince. *Wonderful Counsellor:* against whose deep providence no plots can contend, and conspiracies of short-sighted craft will be in vain. *Hero-God:* invincible in battle. *Everlasting Father:* maintaining and fostering his people, educating them by law and by love. *Prince of peace:* who will cause wars to cease to the ends of the earth. "The empire is peace," was the noted word of a potentate of one time, that charmed the ear for the moment, only to deceive men's hopes. None but the Messiah can assure peace to the nations, as nothing but the fellowship of the truth and of justice can disincline the nations to war. 2. *The nature of his government.* It is for "endless weal." It is to resume, in the deepest and best sense, the well-remembered glories of David's kingdom. It is to be supported, not by countless battalions ("The Lord delighteth not in the legs of a man"), but by "justice and righteousness henceforth and for ever." Its spread will include the spread of true religion. Hence it may be confidently expected that the "zeal of Jehovah," the ever-burning energy of Divine love, will bring to pass these happy results.

"The *great Shepherd* reigns,
And his *unsuffering* kingdom yet will come." J.

Ver. 7—ch. x. 4.—*Oracles concerning Samaria.* I. CONCERNING ITS INFATUATED PRIDE. (Vers. 8—12.) The word of menace is to fall like a heavy weight upon the

nation, a "burden" especially to be felt by the kingdom of the ten tribes (cf. Zech. ix. 1). It has been made tributary to the Assyrians, yet imagines it will recover its former power by violence and predatory raids. In their bravado they exclaim, "Though the bricks fall down, we will build with freestone; and though sycomores are felled, we will make cedars spring up instead!" To punish this insolence, Jehovah has armed its smaller enemies against it—Syrians in the north-east, Philistines in the south-west; and severer judgments are to follow. The cup is not yet full; the avenging hand is still stretched out. The strophe gives us a picture of *infatuation*, leading to obstinate resistance and incurring accumulation of punishment. We may be reminded of that fine picture in Homer of Até, the spirit of error or bewilderment, who with soft feet walks above men's heads, and who would lead all astray to their ruin ('Iliad,' xix. 91, *sqq.*). Yet neither the nation nor the individual falls a prey to such temptations without guilt, though where the guilt begins it may be difficult to trace. The temper of insolence and bravado is a symptom of this aberration creeping on. What need have we to pray that the "eyes of our mind may be opened," that we may never have the light of discernment between the "spirit of truth and the spirit of error" put out in our bosom!

II. CONCERNING ITS OBSTINATE IMPENITENCE. The nation "turns not to him that smote it." It hears not the rod and who hath appointed it. Suffering either changes the disposition and bends the will upon new objects, or it rouses the temper to determined perseverance in the evil course. Men must know the time to retreat and turn back no less than to go forward in a given course. For, as patient continuance in well-doing is blessed with highest promises, the harshness of the impenitent heart treasures up against itself a store of wrath. In this case a visible destruction has come upon Israel. A day of battle has taken place; "head and tail, palm and rush," officers and privates in the army alike, have been cut off. For the leaders of Israel have proved misleaders, and their blind followers have perished. And the prophet represents Jehovah as looking sternly on, neither rejoicing in the youth of the nation, nor pitying its disasters. Suffering unrelieved by pity, woes over which Heaven frowns rather than expands with infinite smiles of hope,—such things follow impenitence and wilfulness.

III. CONCERNING ITS FLAGRANT INIQUITIES. We say *flagrant*, and this word exactly fits the prophet's description: "Wrong burning like fire, devouring thorn and thistle, and kindling the thickets of the forest, so that they curl up in columns of smoke." Covetousness devours and ravages like a famine or a pest. Every one begins to devour his own arm in insatiate greed; that is, one tribe its brother-tribe. Not content with mutual rapacity, Manasseh against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, the two turn against Judah. And so again and again the deep warning reverberates: "His anger is not turned away; his hand is stretched out still."

IV. CONCERNING JUDICIAL WICKEDNESS AND THE FINAL ISSUE. Here the prophet seems to turn to Judah. As one of Jehovah's noblest attributes is that of Father of the fatherless, and as justice is his delight, so nothing can more darkly designate offence against him than the spoliation of the widow and the orphan. Here, then, the climax of denunciation is reached. And the prophet has now only to hint the future judgment and overthrow. What will they do in the day of visitation? What refuge will be open? What retreat in which a false glory may be hidden? They will cringe as prisoners, and as slain they will fall. Better to have the troubled heart, which nevertheless finds its refuge in God, than the reckless self-confidence which invites his anger. Poverty of spirit—against this no prophetic doom is hurled; and adversity with honesty is no real adversity, for the hand of Jehovah is here stretched out, not to smite, but to help.—J.

Ver. 2.—*The dawn of gospel day.* "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The glory which God revealed *then* through the prophet was but a prelude to that greater glory which the Incarnation made manifest. So much so that these words are used in Matt. iv. 16, and relate to Jesus leaving Nazareth and coming to Capernaum, upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim, that so the prophecy might be fulfilled.

I. THE GREAT DARKNESS. History attests that of which prophecy foretells. There was moral darkness. Look at Corinth—so much so that to Corinthianize was to play the wanton. Look at Ephesus. Look at Rome, with its lust and licence; its terrible realism in the cruel sports of the amphitheatre, stained with the massacre of beasts and with the gladiators' blood. Think of the intellectual darkness, when even the city of philosophy, proud Athens, erected an altar—which was a monument of its failure in the search after wisdom—"to the unknown God."

II. THE SOMBRE SHADOW. "The land of the shadow of death." This language does not apply alone to the article of death itself. Every hopeless sorrow is a shadow of the grave. Death reigned supreme over human thought. There was no "looking forward" which could comfort the weary heart of man in its bereavements and griefs. Over city and throne, over the groves of philosophy and the gardens of pleasure, the same shadow brooded. So that the gloom came not alone when life drew near to its close, but the long dark shadow fell over all the pursuits and hopes of human life. As we think of all this we shall understand what the prophet means by a "great" light. For the wondrous glory of the Saviour's revelation of "life and immortality" none of us can overestimate. It changed the face of society, and turned the weeping eyes of a weary world to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.

III. THE WELCOME LIGHT. Light makes all things beautiful. And light from "above" transfigures the lot of man. It turns his afflictions into momentary tribulations, and makes him to look, not on the things which are seen and temporal, but on those which are unseen and eternal. It is related, therefore, to human life as well as spiritual life. Heaven is not only "the rest that remaineth;" its spirit pervades the entire sphere of our earthly history. Everywhere that blessed light shines; and whilst it makes us patient and hopeful in adversity, it gives cheerfulness to our pursuits and sacredness to our friendships—inasmuch as we are his disciples who said, "Let not your heart be troubled . . . I go to prepare a place for you."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Great light in deep darkness.* In wrath God remembers mercy; he makes us to "sing of mercy and of judgment." He "will not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever." Even unto disobedient and perverse Israel he will manifest his Divine pity, his redeeming power. Respecting this promise we may note—

I. ITS HISTORICAL FULFILMENT. This, in the literal and primary sense, is involved in no slight obscurity (see Exposition). The difficulty in determining the period when these regions saw the light of liberty and plenty after the time of darkness and desolation is painfully suggestive of the fact that it is a very difficult thing to find any instances of a nation that has once lost its place and power recovering its position. Even those which have had the best opportunities of so doing have failed to use them; witness Egypt, Greece, Rome. It seems as if nations could "find no place of repentance." The fact may well stir every patriotic feeling in our breasts, and make us resolute to infuse into all our laws, customs, institutions, the purifying and preserving influences of Christian truth.

II. ITS SUPREME ILLUSTRATION. (Matt. iv. 15, 16.) Undoubtedly this passage finds its culminating fulfilment in the advent and the work of Christ. "That was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlighteneth every one." 1. The era when Jesus was born was one of peculiar darkness. Ignorance, vice, superstition, violence, fanaticism, unbelief, despair,—these abounded as never before. 2. He became the Light of the world. (1) His *truth* illumined the dark valleys of error; (2) his *life* shed a bright light on the life of man; (3) his *redeeming death* opened and made clear to all mankind the way of return and restoration to God.

III. ITS REALIZATION IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA. 1. *Among peoples.* Many are the communities, larger or lesser, which, found in gross darkness, have been enlightened by the gospel of the grace of God. Beside the various European nations and our own islands, there are such places as Greenland, the islands of Polynesia, Madagascar, etc. 2. *In individual men.* Down into the human soul, into the mind dark with unbelief or crusted over with worldliness, or blinded by prejudice and consequent misconception, or beguiled and led astray by evil passion or some strong, spiritual hallucination, there has shone the light of Christian truth, a "healing ray from heaven;" and he that walked "in the shadow of death" now dwells in the light of God, and will dwell in his

glory. (1) We may all open our hearts to its shining; (2) we have the fatal power of closing them if we choose; (3) we are all invited to reflect and multiply its beams.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Spiritual empire.* "And the government shall be upon his shoulder."

I. THE ACHIEVEMENT WHICH LAY OUTSIDE THE PURPOSE OF THE SON OF GOD. For what end was that wondrous Child born, that holy Son given? He came *not to restore a fallen human dynasty.* The most ardent and eager hopes of his countrymen were directed to the overthrow of the Roman power and to the re-establishment of the kingdom of David in all, and more than all, its pristine glory. Jesus Christ distinctly disavowed any such purpose as this. His kingdom, he said, was *not* "of this world."

II. THE SPIRITUAL EMPIRE WHICH HE CAME TO ESTABLISH. We shall see what and how truly great this was if we consider: 1. *In what condition Christ found the world when he came.* He found it (1) with its mind full of fatal error—the favoured people having sunk into a dreary, withering formalism, and the whole Gentile world into idolatry or unbelief; (2) with its heart full of pride, selfishness, and hatred; (3) with its life full of unrighteousness and impurity. 2. *What he came to accomplish in regard to it.* He came to undo all this; to expel this blighting error; to uproot this pride, cruelty, and selfishness; to abolish this iniquity and enormity; to plant and nourish in the mind and heart and life of man the beautiful and admirable opposites of all this—truth, humility, love, righteousness; and *so* to exercise a beneficent and transcendent power, and *so* to take the government of the world upon his shoulder. 3. *The only way by which he could gain his end.* Christ knew that the one way to exert this renovating power, to wield this victorious influence, was by winning the world's devotion to himself through his own dying love. Therefore he deliberately entered and determinately pursued the path which led to Gethsemane and to Calvary. Lifted up before the eyes of a wondering and believing world, he would draw all men unto himself, and thus to truth, to holiness, to God. 4. *The extent to which he has succeeded.* In spite of the miserable corruptions which have dishonoured and enfeebled his Church, and in spite of the languor and inactivity by which large periods of its history have been marked, we find that (1) error is dying and truth reviving under every sky; the heathen temple is being closed; the hoary systems of misbelief, pierced and penetrated by modern science and assailed by Christian truth, are shaking to their fall; (2) pride is being humbled; (3) philanthropy—a pitiful, generous, self-sacrificing regard for the unfortunate and the abandoned—is taking the place of hard-hearted indifference; (4) the Prince of Peace is being honoured where the god of war was once worshipped. (5) Righteousness and purity are returning to human life. Slavery, lust, drunkenness, profanity, are not yet dead, but their death-warrant has been signed and they are doomed to die. The thought of Jesus Christ is taking possession of the human mind; his principles are reaching and regulating human life; his Spirit is changing the human world; the government is being laid upon his shoulder. (1) *Let us rejoice in the growing power* of that Son that was born to our race. The empire of the Cæsars, of the Pharaohs, of the Napoleons, is nothing but a memory, a history; the rule of Jesus Christ is a benign, a mighty, a growing power, an abiding and extending influence. *That* is a fruitless, sapless stump; *this* is a tree of life, bearing all manner of fruits, "and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." (2) *Let us take care that we are among the subjects* of his spiritual realm. His is the future of the world; to be separated from him is to lose the heritage, to forfeit the citizenship which will soon be the one thing worth possessing. (3) *Let us recognize the true wisdom;* not to strive after outward grandeur. In this attempt we may fall and be bruised or even broken, or we may succeed and be satiated and thirst again. The true wisdom is found in shedding a sweet and sanctifying influence over all whom we can reach and bless.—C.

Ver. 6.—*The wonderful Lord.* "His name shall be called Wonderful." And well may *he* have been named Wonderful, whose words, whose works, and whose love were such as those of Jesus Christ. We look at—

I. THE MARVEL OF HIS TEACHING. 1. It struck his contemporaries with awe and with astonishment (see Matt. v. 28, 29; xiii. 54; xxii. 22). 2. It strikes us with wonder still. That a Jew, brought up at Nazareth, receiving a very slight education, having

no intercourse with men of other nations, acted upon by the narrowing and stiffening influences which were prevalent and powerful in his land and time, should teach as he taught about (1) the fatherhood of God; (2) the spirituality of Divine worship and sacred service; (3) the openness of the outcast and the abandoned to return to the favour and likeness of God; (4) the spiritual and universal character of the kingdom of God; (5) the needfulness of the child-spirit and of humility for entrance into the kingdom of truth and righteousness; (6) the attainment of life through death, etc.;—all this is not only surprising, marvellous; it is positively unaccountable on any other theory than that God dwelt in him and he in God.

II. THE WONDER OF HIS POWER. 1. This also excited the astonishment of his contemporaries (see Matt. vii. 27; Mark i. 27; vii. 37; Luke v. 26, etc.). 2. It calls forth our reverent admiration still. We wonder and adore as we realize that (1) he compelled the earnest attention of his countrymen; (2) he has commanded the attention of all the ages and of most of the peoples ever since; (3) he has been, and is regarded as the Saviour, the Lord, the Friend of millions of individual souls, and has brightened, comforted, transformed innumerable human lives; (4) he has produced a manifest change—often amounting to a revolution—in the sentiment, the principles, and the institutions of mankind.

III. HIS KNOWLEDGE-PASSING LOVE. (See Eph. iii. 19.) 1. On one occasion, at least, the people were powerfully impressed with the fervour of his love (John xi. 36; see also John xiii. 1). 2. The love of Christ is far more astonishing to us who can better recognize its greatness. Now that the facts of the Incarnation and the purpose of his sufferings and his death have been illumined by the teaching of the Divine Spirit, we know how surpassingly great, how wonderful, were (1) his sacrificial love to our race—not sparing himself, but delivering himself up for us all, and pursuing that path of sacrifice even to the very end; (2) his distinguishing love to the individual soul. So that, with Paul, every one may say, "He loved me;" may, indeed, say, "He *loves* me"—is seeking my salvation, has borne with my sin and shortcoming, extends to me his pardoning love, is dealing patiently and tenderly with me, is leading me by the right and wise way to the heavenly city.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Chief counsels of Christ.* "His name shall be called Counsellor." If we approach Jesus Christ as a Divine Counseller, *i.e.* as One that has unerring wisdom to impart to us respecting the chief good of human life, the secret of true success, the way to reach the goal and secure the prize, we shall find from him these principal counsels—

I. THAT IF WE WOULD FIND THE TRUTH WE SEEK WE MUST COME AS A CHILD TO ITS SOURCE. Into the "kingdom of God," which is the kingdom of truth and joy, he tells us emphatically and repeatedly we must enter as a little child, that has everything to learn, and is willing to be taught by its heavenly Father, by its one great Teacher (see Matt. xviii. 34; Mark x. 15; Luke xviii. 14; cf. 1 Cor. iii. 18).

II. THAT NOT HUMAN HONOUR AND WORLDLY WEALTH, BUT THE LIKENESS AND THE FAVOUR OF GOD ARE THE TRUE OBJECTS OF PURSUIT. (See Matt. v. 45; vi. 19, 20; Luke xii. 15; iv. 4; John v. 44; xiv. 23.)

III. THAT NOT BY SELF-ASSERTION, BUT BY SELF-RENUNCIATION ARE OUR REAL INTERESTS SECURED. (See Matt. x. 37—39; John xii. 25.)

IV. THAT IN CLOSE AND LIVING UNION WITH HIMSELF WE ATTAIN OUR HIGHEST HERITAGE. *The* chief counsel of Christ was that, with our sins, our sorrows, our struggles, our aspirations, we should come into intimate union with himself, the Saviour, the Friend, the Master, the Leader, of mankind. In clearest, strongest, tenderest tones he says ever to us all, "Come unto me; abide in me; follow me; and ye shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."—C.

Ver. 6.—*Christ in relation to time.* "The Everlasting Father." If we take the words in their literal rendering, "the Father of Eternity," we gain a meaning which is more consonant with the scriptural teaching respecting the Messiah, the Son of man. He is *One who has much to do with eternity;* he is an (or the) Eternal One. This attribution to Jesus Christ suggests to us—

I. THE BRIEF SPACE OF TIME WHICH HIS LIFE OCCUPIES AS A MATTER OF HISTORY.

Only "a little while" had they the Light of the world with them. Parts of three years, a space of time to be counted by months,—this was all the interval between his coming and his going; it was a lightning-flash between the long spaces of darkness.

II. ITS LONG BACKWARD LOOK. It looks back (1) through all human history: for all the lines of national life (Hebrew, Roman, Grecian, etc.) converged and met at his birth; all that had existed had been leading up to, had been preparing for, his advent; (2) to the remotest ages, even to the beginning. "Before Abraham was, I am;" "He was before all things;" "In the beginning was the Word."

III. ITS LONG FORWARD LOOK. The scribes and Pharisees thought, when they saw him die on the cross, that his would be but an ephemeral career; that his influence would quickly die, and his name be soon forgotten. But we know that (1) he has commanded the attention of the world for eighteen centuries; (2) he has been by far the greatest Power therein; (3) he is now recognized and honoured by his Church as its living, reigning Lord; (4) he will appear as its Judge; (5) he will be for ever the Object of our heavenly worship and service. He is the "Father of eternity." Therefore: 1. *Let us reverence him while we trust and love him.* Our Friend with whom we have such happy fellowship is One in very closest connection with the Divine; he is the "Father of eternity," though manifested in time, and with us for so brief a day. 2. *Let us trust him while we work for him.* We may be disappointed at the smallness of results, at the apparent distance of the goal; we may be impatient in spirit, and we may be hurried or even unchristian in the methods we adopt, in the weapons we employ. Let us be steadied, calmed, righted, as we remember that he whom we serve is not one who is shut up to a few years or decades, or even a few centuries, in which to work out his mission of love; he is the "Father of Eternity;" he is Lord of all future time; he will cause his Word to be fulfilled; we may patiently wait, while we earnestly and faithfully work.—C.

Ver. 6.—*Christian peace.* "The Prince of Peace." Before considering what is the peace which is distinctively Christian, it may be well to remark: 1. That the first, incidental result of the coming of Christ is not peace, but discord (see Matt. x. 34—36). The first consequence of the introduction or the revival of Christian truth is *persecution.* For this the Christian faith is not responsible; it is due to the fact that error is so blind, bigotry so pitiless, sin so cruel. 2. That everything is not gained for Christ when a superficial smoothness has been secured. It will take much more than a cessation of "war," a dismantling of forts and a disbanding of troops, to arrive at the peace which is of Christ. It is a Christian poet who writes—

> "I love no peace which is not fellowship,
> And which includes not mercy; I would have
> Rather, the raking of the guns across
> The world."

Better, in Christ's name and in his cause, the stern and even the sanguinary struggle which seeks to establish righteousness than the hollow peace which is satisfied with slavery, serfdom, or servility. 3. That the peace which the Messiah came to bring was not that of the conquering sword, but the prevailing Spirit; that which is won, not on the battle-field, but in the depths of the human heart—first in the heart of the Son of man himself, and then in the souls of all the children of men. Of this spiritual rest which the Prince of Peace imparts, we may say that it includes—

I. PEACE WITH GOD. Sin separates between us and our Divine Father; it produces condemnation on his part, dread on our part; it ends in an unnatural and deplorable alienation. In Christ is mercy, restoration, peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," etc. (Rom. v. 1; see Rom. viii. 1).

II. INWARD REST. Sin is the great disturber, the constant troubler of the human heart. It is the source of all disorder, and therefore of all distress. It casts down that which should be uppermost—conscience, reason, holy aspiration, etc.; it enthrones that which should be in subjection—passion, self, temporal interests, etc. The Prince of Peace secures to the human soul its right condition; he restores the true order; he redresses, re-establishes, revolutionizes; he "makes all things new" within. And when the spiritual nature is thus reset, all its powers taking their proper place and discharging

their rightful functions, there is a "great calm" within; they who repair to the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, have "rest unto their souls" (Matt. xi. 28—30).

III. SOCIAL CONCORD. Christian *love* (John xiii. 34, 35), Christian *magnanimity* (Matt. v. 43—48; Rom. xii. 18—20); Christian *reconciliation* (Matt. v. 25), Christian *generosity* (Rom. xii. 10; Eph. v. 21; Phil. ii. 3), Christian *courtesy* (1 Pet. iii. 8; 1 Pet. v. 5), Christian *patience* (1 Thess. v. 14),—these are the conditions and the sources of true and abiding peace among men.—C.

Vers. 8—12.—*The evil spirit of defiance.* The spirit which is here rebuked is that of a guilty defiance of God. Jehovah had visited Israel with the signs of his displeasure—had humbled and impoverished her. What attitude should she now assume? That of humility and amendment? Nothing was further from her mind. She would contend in her own strength against her fate, against the Lord who had abased her; she would show to him the futility of his correction. The bricks might be fallen down; it was of no consequence—they would build with hewn stones. The sycomores were felled; it was all the better—they would put cedars in their place (ver. 10). They would, in their proud independence, convert Divine chastisements into a national advantage. Thus they breathed the very spirit of defiance. Respecting this arrogant temper, we mark—

I. ITS COMMON COURSE. 1. First comes some serious departure from God or from his service on the part of the nation, the Church, the family, or the individual man. 2. Then comes the Divine correction. This may be in the form of prophetic, or parental, or pastoral rebuke, or of some serious reverse in temporal affairs, or of bodily sickness, or of painful bereavement. 3. Then comes the resentment and revolt of the human will against the Divine. Instead of hearkening, heeding, and repenting, the nation (or the individual) determines to act in a spirit of defiance. In its (his) own strength, it will rise above its present circumstances; it will make good its position; it will brave the worst perils; it will endure extremest hardships, the greatest losses; it will turn its fallen bricks into massive stones that will not fall; it will exchange its feeble sycomores that are cut down for strong cedars which the wildest gales will spare.

II. ITS GUILT. The guilt of cherishing such a spirit is of a very aggravated character. 1. It goes beyond the ordinary sin of inattention. To be heedless when God is speaking, by whatever voice he may address us, is surely iniquitous enough; but to act in deliberate defiance of the Almighty is, by many degrees, worse. 2. It amounts to a positive rebelliousness on the part of the human will against that of the Divine. It is man resolving that, with his puny strength, he will match himself against his Maker and will prevail. It is sin which contains the elements of insubmission, determined opposition, arrogance.

III. ITS FOLLY. In the case of Israel it was to be followed with fearful penalty. That guilty nation was (1) to be pressed on every hand by its enemies (ver. 12); (2) to be devoured by them (ver. 12); (3) to be prepared for still impending miseries: "For all this," etc. (ver. 12). The nation (or the individual) that indulges in this evil spirit of defiance will find, in time, what a disastrous mistake it (he) has made. For the defiance of God (1) shuts out immeasurable good—whoso hearkens when God reproves, and, heeding his voice, returns in penitence to his side and his service, begins an upward path which leads to the heavenly hills; but it also (2) shuts in to unimaginable woes. We may let the words of the text (ver. 12) suggest the form they take. 1. *Inextricable difficulty.* The being surrounded on every hand by enemies; for sin leads on and down to cruel captivities of many kinds, from which the soul struggles vainly to disengage itself. 2. *Waste.* The being devoured by adversaries; time lost; strength impaired; the soul ravaged; reputation despoiled. 3. *Fear of the future.* A dread of the outstretched hand of Divine retribution which has more strokes to deal.—C.

Vers. 14—17.—*Man in God's view.* There are three classes among mankind in reference to whom we here learn the thought and feeling of God. We infer from what is stated in the text—

I. HIS SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE YOUNG. Things had come to *such* a state, the natural order of things was *so* reversed, that "the Lord would have no joy in their young men" (ver. 17). Hence we may fairly argue that the common and normal condition is that

in which God *has* joy in the young. It is a strange and unnatural thing to him, that which is altogether alien to his own disposition, to take no deep and Divine interest in them. God has the young people in his thought, in his affection; they are the objects of his peculiar regard and tender interest. He is seeking their true welfare; he is addressing himself to them in the terms and the tones of fatherly love. There is nothing more pleasing in his eyes than the response which the young heart makes to his inviting voice.

II. HIS PECULIAR TENDERNESS TOWARD THE AFFLICTED. It is a sign of the very extremity of the Divine displeasure that the Lord will not even "have mercy on the fatherless and widows." The rebelliousness of Israel must have been great indeed, her iniquity heinous and aggravated indeed, to bring about a conclusion so startling and so strange as that. For it is the most wide departure from the constant thought and habit of the Most High. It is in his heart of pity to show peculiar kindness to his afflicted children. Those who are in sorrow commonly receive the precious sympathy of their fellow-men; this may fail, but it is certainly insufficient. Then the wounded spirit finds refuge in the sympathy of Christ; it has the strongest assurance of his presence, his pity, his succour (Ps. ciii. 13; Heb. iv. 15, etc.).

III. HIS SEVERITY TOWARD THE FALSE. The prophet regarded himself as being at the head of the nation, and expected to be so regarded by others. But not so did the Lord regard him if he were false to his vocation. In the Divine view he was not the distinguished bough waving from the top of the palm tree; he was the coarse reed that grew in the rank marshes (see vers. 14, 15). 1. Any and every dissembler is hateful to God. He denounces the hypocrite, wherever he is found (ver. 17). 2. But the false teacher is the object of especial Divine displeasure. "The prophet that teacheth lies is the tail." Be it remembered that the prophet is now, what he was then, *the man who professes to speak for God;* that if, making this profession, we publish that which is error rather than truth, we do two things which are most deplorable. In the *first* place we draw down on ourselves the awful anger of the righteous Ruler; and in the *second* place we slay those whom we pretend to heal: they "that are led (misled) of us are *destroyed*" (ver. 16). To receive religious error into the soul is to be poisoned with a deadly drug; guilty indeed is the hand that administers it.—C.

Vers. 18—21.—*Sin suicidal.* From this declaration of judgment against a guilty nation we may gather some principles which are applicable to men as well as nations elsewhere, and indeed everywhere. We learn—

I. THAT SIN IS A WASTING POWER. "Wickedness burneth as a fire" (ver. 18). Where sin abounds there desolation abounds. The longer a man (or nation) has lived under its dominion the more has power withered and possession decreased, the more has heritage been wasted and lost. 1. *Sin first destroys the less valuable.* "The brier and the thorn it shall consume"—the visible, the temporal, the pecuniary, the material, the fleshly. 2. *Then the more valuable.* "It shall kindle in the thickets of the grove." The reputation, the intelligence, the character, the influence for good,—these disappear under the consuming fires of sin. 3. *Then it amounts to a conspicuous disaster.* "They shall mount up in volumes of rising smoke." The ruin is so striking that attention is commanded; all surrounding nations must observe it; all neighbours must remark it.

II. THAT IT TURNS ITS HAND UPON ITSELF. Of the fire of human sin humanity itself is the fuel (ver. 19). This is palpably and painfully true: 1. *Of the individual.* He that sins against God wrongs his own soul, first and most (Prov. viii. 36). It is not only the drunkard and the debauchee who injure themselves by their iniquities. Look *on far* enough, or look *down deep* enough, and you will find that every transgressor is putting his own most precious interests, as fuel, into the devouring flame; every such man "eats the flesh of his own arm" (ver. 20). 2. *Of the community.* It is sin, the departure from the Divine will, which brings about (1) faction in the state; (2) contention in the Church; (3) discord in the family. Often, in its ultimate outworkings, it becomes remorseless and insatiable. "No man will spare his brother;" he "eats and is not satisfied" (ver. 19; see Gal. v. 15).

III. THAT THE WASTE OF SIN IS ITS DIVINELY APPOINTED PENALTY. "Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened." It seems to be in the very nature of things that sin, whether in the individual or the community, should consume and

destroy; but so much has the Lord of hosts to do with the nature of things that those who thus suffer the consequences of their guilt may well feel that the punitive hand of God is laid upon them. And they will also do well to feel—

IV. THAT GOD HAS SOMETHING MORE TO SAY THAN HE HAS YET SPOKEN. "For all this," etc.—C.

Ver. 2.—*Light in darkness.* Cheyne's translation brings out the meaning and reference of this passage. "Surely there is (now) no (more) gloom to her whose lot was affliction. At the former time she brought shame on the land of Zebulun, and on the land of Naphtali, but in the latter he hath brought honour on the way by the sea, the other side of Jordan, the district of the nations." The historical facts to which allusion is made are: 1. The despoiling of Upper and Lower Galilee by Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 29; comp. Zech. x. 10). This part of the country was attacked first, and it suffered most and longest. 2. The Messiah, the Saviour, the great Light shining on the darkness, came in the part of Galilee belonging to Zebulun. It is here noted, as a characteristic of the Divine dealings, that those who suffer most are graciously considered first, and that Divine restorings come most tenderly where there have been Divine woundings and smitings.

I. THE DARKNESS OF BONDAGE MAKES BEAUTIFUL THE LIGHT OF LIBERTY. This district had been the first to fall under the yoke of Assyria. As the border country, its sufferings under bondage had been extreme. This may be taken to represent the bondage of men under sin. "Whosoever committeth sin is the bond-slave of sin." Christ came to bring liberty for such captives. And the more bitterly the yoke of sin is felt, the more glorious seems that breaking of bonds and letting prisoners go free, which was the work of the spiritual Redeemer.

II. THE DARKNESS OF SUFFERING SHOWS UP THE LIGHT OF LIFE. The distress of the country resulted in prevailing diseases of singularly painful types, such as the demoniacal possessions. In view of these how gracious was his work who came healing all the diseases of the people, and casting out the evil spirits! Life for the stricken! Life for the maimed, blind, deaf, dumb, dead! Life even for those "dead in trespasses and sins." "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."

III. THE DARKNESS OF LONELINESS GLORIFIES THE LIGHT OF LOVE. Galilee was a despised, neglected region. "Can any good thing come out of Galilee?" Christ, the Lord of love, finds out the neglected one and comes first to it; honours it, brings to it the joy unspeakable of being cared for and loved. The sinner, in the sense of his sin, feels lonely—nobody cares for him. It is light, hope, the dawn of bliss, when it comes right home to a sinner's heart, "Jesus cares *for me.*" The light has risen on your dark Galilee; but the grave question is—Have you seen the light? Have you welcomed the light? Are you walking in the light?—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The joy of men in a Redeemer.* "They joy before thee," in view of the Redeemer thou hast sent. There can be no joy like that men feel in the acceptance of God's "unspeakable gift." Illustrate by the song and chorus of the angels at Bethlehem: "Unto you is born a Saviour;" "Glory to God in the highest." And by the triumph-song of the redeemed ones in the glory: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," etc. There had been times of great rejoicing in the history of Israel, such as in the days of Solomon (2 Kings iv. 20; xxii. 13); and of riotous feasting, as in days of Uzziah (ch. v. 11—14). But such joy was merely passing excitement; it was as the "crackling of thorns under a pot" compared with the deep, lasting joy of the time when Jesus, the Redeemer from sin and all its consequences, bowed the heavens, came down, and dwelt among men. We ask (1) why men should chiefly rejoice in a Redeemer; and (2) what kind of joy theirs should be who have proved how he can redeem.

I. WHY MEN SHOULD CHIEFLY REJOICE IN A REDEEMER. 1. Because the one thing man needs above all others is redemption; not science, not revelation, not civilization, not morality, not social elevation. Man is in one condition whose interests are, to him, supreme—he is a *sinner*, and so his supreme need is a Saviour. With the need and the supply the Word of God fully deals. It is the Divine message to man, the sinner. Its voice may be translated thus: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is

thy help found." 2. Because this one thing, redemption, is wholly beyond man's attainment. We are amazed at what man *can* do, in overcoming material obstacles and yoking to his service the giant forces of nature. But at redemption from sin man is arrested; there his power ceases. "No man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him." God is represented as saying, "I looked, and there was no man . . . therefore mine own arm brought salvation." 3. Because man had no reason to expect redemption, and could make no claim to Divine intervention. Redemption is a sovereign device, a display of infinite mercy, a work of unbought love. Its root is, "God is love."

II. WHAT KIND OF JOY THEIRS SHOULD BE WHO HAVE PROVED HOW HE CAN REDEEM. There are two figures blended in the text. Joy of harvest. Joy of victors on dividing the spoil of battle-fields. They suggest: 1. The joy of *possession*—a harvest of supply for coming needs, spoil from the tents of the foe. 2. The joy of *triumph*. To possess the enemy's camp is proof that the foe is wholly vanquished. Jesus, as our Redeemer, has "led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The fatherhood of God revealed in Messiah.* The word "Everlasting Father," or "Father of Eternity," is applied to Messiah as the Revealer of God to men. That the passage can only refer to Messiah is agreed by all devout students. God designed to reveal himself at last and fully to his creatures *through a man's earthly life.* God can only reveal himself to a creature in the lines of that nature which he has given to the creature. When God was dealing with *man*, he set forth the manhood of his Messiah most prominently; but when man comes to know his gift, he finds he has received his God, and learned the name by which he may be called. Arguing may not always convince of the Deity of Christ. It is rather like trying to prove to a man that it is the spring-time of the year. Spring is in the atmosphere—in the balmy breathing of the air, in the quickening power of the sunshine, in the lengthening days, and in the bursting life of leaf and flower everywhere around us. So the very atmosphere of Christ is the atmosphere of God. Everywhere, and in everything, we *feel* that he is God. Our text is striking in the contrasts it presents—contrasts which were realized in the human life of the Messiah. Everywbere in his story we find the blended God and man. He was the outcast babe for whom there was no room in the inn, and yet angels heralded his birth, and Magi offered to him the worship due to a king. He was a simple child of twelve years old, and yet the temple doctors were astonished at his understanding and answers. He submits to John's baptism of water, and yet the Holy Ghost descends upon him, and the voice of "most exceeding peace" gives testimony to him as the Divine Son. He weeps the tears of human friendship at the grave of Lazarus, and yet he speaks the words which call the dead to life. He dies in agony and shame, as only a man could die; he rises in triumph and glory, as only a God could rise. So in this prophecy of Isaiah. The "coming One" is a child, but the "key of government is upon his shoulder." He is a child, and yet he is "Wonder-Counsellor, God-Mighty-One, Prince of Peace." He is the Son, and yet it can be said of him that he is the "Everlasting Father." This last assertion seems to be the most astonishing of them all. "The Son is the Father." Christ sustained this view: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Every man's work is to find the Father in Christ. No man has truly seen Christ who has not found in him the Father, and learned from him the fatherhood of God.

I. MAY WE THINK OF GOD AS FATHER? To show himself to man, God must come into man's sphere, not as a cherub or as an angel, but as a man. "Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He must also show himself in some particular *form of man.* Men are kings, or prophets, or judges, or husbands, or fathers, or sons, or brothers, and God must make choice of the form that may most worthily represent him. Some say we must think of God chiefly as a *King.* But few of us are stirred at heart by the relations of a king. He is a person to be feared, obeyed, and served. If he is to be loved it is only with a patriotic, it is not with a personal, affection. In the pages of history we can scarcely find a king whose character and career help us to a worthy idea of God. Think of the kings of Eastern nations. Think of so-called Christian kings. There rise before the mind scenes of barbarity, blood-guiltiness, tyranny, debauchery, and cruelty which make us ashamed to

set the thought of God and of earthly kings together. On the other hand, there never has been age or nation in which the dearest thoughts and tenderest associations and most reverent feelings did not gather round the word "father." Everywhere, even in benighted heathendom, fathers have been men's ideals of the pure, the revered, and the good. God comes nearest to men if he can be shown to them as the "Everlasting Father." Love is the supreme glory of fatherhood; but it is only *primus inter pares*, the equals of "authority," "justice," "holiness." It would not be fair to say of any good earthly father, "He is all love, all indulgence; there is in him no justice, no reverence, no government." We never want to bolster up the authority of our earthly father by deluding ourselves into the notion that he is a king; and we can yield our fullest allegiance to God as our "Everlasting Father." We need not force ourselves to conceive of him as that mysterious thing, a moral Governor, for which we can find no human model. What is God to you when you can fully receive the revelation that he is the Father? Is there any less reverence for him? Is your sense of justice, righteousness, law, or authority weakened when you call him "Father"? Let Christ teach us the true God and the eternal life. He shows us a weeping prodigal child pressing his face into a father's bosom, heart beating to heart, the one in all the anguish of penitence, the other in all the anguish of pitying, fatherly love. The father's arms are round the restored boy; and who shall say that all highest law is not vindicated when that father wipes away the tears, and calls for music and dancing, the best robe, and the fatted calf? Who ever saw weeping rebels on kings' bosoms? Who ever saw kings shedding tears over returning subjects? We must go deeper, far deeper, into the very heart of the truth about God when we say, "He is our Father."

II. MESSIAH SHOWS GOD TO US AS "EVERLASTING FATHER." The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with a very striking statement: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us *by Son*." God had spoken by creation of a Creator, by prophets of a God, by ambassadors of a King, and now by *Son* of a Father. Messiah is represented as Son, and Son of God, to enable us to conceive of God as Father. The very person of our Lord Jesus Christ is itself a revelation of the Father. The gospels show us that his supreme effort was to make men know and think well of the Father. He was a Jew, and yet his originality is nowhere felt more than in the word which he uses for God. We find very seldom, almost never, any of the recognized Hebrew terms—El, Elohim, Shaddai, or Jah; Jehovah or God; his word is always "Father." On every page we find the term recurring. Illustrate from the sermon on mount; address on sending the disciples forth for their trial-mission, etc. Conclude by commending this view of God as the first and foundation-truth of the Messianic revelation. We need not be anxious to set it under limitations and restrictions. Christ never fenced it off. He never limited its applications. He never hesitated to preach it everywhere. He expected to waken a new spirit in men, the child-spirit, by telling them of their Father in heaven. If we simply follow Christ, we shall show men the Father-God everywhere in Messiah's life and teaching, seen even in Messiah's death and atonement and sacrifice. —R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The continuity of a kingdom founded on righteousness.* "A King shall reign in righteousness." "Of the increase of his government and prosperity there shall be no end . . . To establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." David's reign, as that of the first and most faithful theocratic king, is the imperfect earthly type of the ideal kingdom, founded on righteousness, and ruled in righteousness. Whatever may have been the personal infirmities of David, officially he was thoroughly loyal and true to the Divine supremacy, and, speaking in human measures, it may be said of him, "Righteousness was the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." Messiah's spiritual reign is the complete antitypo and realization of the righteous kingdom. His people are, ideally, "all holy;" they are called to be holy, pledged to strive after holiness, and Messiah rules them in righteousness.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM. That is, the vindication and manifestation of the Divine righteousness, in the obedience, submission, life, and death of the Lord Jesus. He "magnified the Law and made it honourable." In him

"righteousness and peace kissed each other." The spiritual kingdom could have no other basis than God's righteousness, and Jesus must clear that righteousness of all misapprehension, and show men how it lies as the corner-stone of the kingdom which he built up.

II. THE INCREASE OF THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM. It must be *progressive*, because it has vitality, which necessarily involves increase and growth; it must be *aggressive*, because there is a war-spirit in all righteousness; it cannot abide quietly beside evil, or rest until all evil is conquered and won. It is as light, and must conflict with darkness. It must be *universal*; for, being the kingdom of the one God, it is the kingdom of all men everywhere. There is no end to the labours of the servants of this kingdom, until the very utmost limits of the earth are reached. Men must know the name of God the Saviour, from "the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same."

III. THE STABILITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM. It is the kingdom of God, the *good*, the *right;* and it is kin with him, and stable as he is. "Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" Evil can never become so strong as good. Good has always God "at the back of it." And security means peace and prosperity. The first and essential work of all governments is to obtain perfect security for life and for property. Then commerce will flourish, and civilization will advance. Men can trust the government, and adventure their wealth in business enterprise. The righteous kingdom of Messiah gives absolute security to its members. No man in it ever wants to wrong his brother, so no disturbances come to shake its stability.

IV. THE PERPETUITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS KINGDOM. No forces can ever arise in any age to stop it. National sins bring on the destruction of nations. *Right* must be eternal. It can never be replaced by a *better*. "Against it the gates of hell cannot prevail." It may, in conclusion, be shown that the rule of righteousness ensures peace, power, prosperity, universal piety towards God, and universal brotherhood amongst men.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The Divine anger.* "For all this his anger is not turned away." The reference of the previous verses is to the calamities which are surely overtaking Rezin of Syria, and Pekah of Israel, as judgments on them, signs of Divine indignation, for their schemes against Judah. Rezin was threatened by Assyria; Pekah was threatened both by his former ally, Israel, and on the other side by the Philistines. As yet, however, these judgments had not proved effectual in humbling Rezin and Pekah, or in leading them to forsake their self-willed ways and seek the help and guidance of Jehovah; so yet more and heavier judgments must come on them, and they must not think, because there seemed a little lull in the storm, that Divine wrath was abated, Divine judgments were exhausted, or God's outstretched hand drawn back.

I. DIVINE ANGER, BEING THAT OF AN INFINITE BEING, CAN NEVER BE AT A LOSS FOR MODES OF EXPRESSION. There are always fresh arrows in his quiver. This should check all carnal security. Clear heavens may but mean gathering storms. Hush in the evening air may but indicate approaching earthquake. The seemingly secure house of prosperity may be within a moment of the lightning-flash. God can always find out how best to smite.

II. DIVINE ANGER, BEING A REMEDIAL FORCE, WILL NOT CEASE UNTIL ITS PURPOSES ARE WROUGHT OUT. It proposed the humbling of Syria and Israel, and the conviction of the sin of their wilfulness and ungodliness. Therefore, if Syria and Israel resisted one expression of the anger, another must be found. Since the anger works only towards good, we may well say, "Blessed be God, that he will never cease to be *angry* until he is enabled to *forgive*."

III. DIVINE ANGER, BEING THE STERN SIDE OF LOVE, SPENDS ITSELF IN CORRECTIVE DISPENSATIONS. If we ask what Divine *love* would do for sinners, for rebellious, for persistent sinners, then the answer will tell us what Divine *anger* would do for them. To the resistant and wilful God's dealings take form as anger. To the submissive and humble God's dealings take form as chastisement. The features prominent in Divine dealings we ourselves determine by the response which we make to those dealings.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The sin of leading others astray.* The point of the expression is, that the leaders of the nation are really *misleaders*. The persons referred to are described in

ver. 15 as "the ancient and honourable," and as "the prophet that teacheth lies," evidently including those having influence by reason of their social status, and having influence by reason of their official positions. It is well for us to remember the responsibility of positions as well as of talents. Society is directly affected by the morality, the prevailing tone, the intelligence, and the religiousness of the upper and the learned classes. Leadership is also a talent or endowment, given by God to individual men and women, and so it is to be regarded as, and used as, a Divine trust. A man's power of leadership among his fellow-men is to be laid on God's altar, and used in God's service.

I. EVERYBODY HAS SOME INFLUENCE ON OTHERS; by virtue of: 1. *Relationship*, as masters, husbands, fathers, etc. 2. *Position*, one class of society becoming ideals to the class below them. 3. *Character*, natural and trained. 4. *Education*, involving superior knowledge and mental control.

II. SOME HAVE VERY SPECIAL POWERS OF LEADERSHIP. Illustrate by the first Napoleon. Some men seem to master our wills, and compel us to do what they wish. We find such persons in all spheres of life. The power is one of the secrets of success in business. It is often the genius of secretaries, and of teachers. Illustrate from T. Moore's poem in 'Lalla Rookh,' "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan."

III. SUCH INFLUENCE MAY BE MADE A CURSE. Leadership may cover and excuse wrong-doing. Personal relations may disturb moral distinctions.

IV. SUCH INFLUENCE MAY BE MADE A BLESSING. Leadership may present the example of righteousness and obedience. Personal relations with others may be Christ-like, and so a leading towards goodness and God. Special Divine judgments come on those who determinedly lead others astray. The enticer and seducer who wile into the ways that lead down to the pit, God surely hateth and watcheth. His hand will be heavy on them some day.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Vers. 1—4.—The prophecy begun in ch. ix. 8 terminates with this stanza, which contains a warning against injustice and oppression, addressed to Israel and Judah equally, and accompanied by the threat of a "day of desolation," when those who have refused to make God their Refuge will have no resource, but to go into captivity with the "prisoners," or to perish with the "slain." A foreign conquest, accompanied by slaughter, and the deportation of captives, is not obscurely intimated.

Ver. 1.—**Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees** (comp. ch. i. 17, 20, 26; v. 23, etc.). The perversion of judgment from the judgment-seat is the sin rebuked. It was certainly prevalent in Judah, it may also have been practised in Israel. **And that write grievousness**, etc. Translate, *and unto the writers that enregister oppression.* The decrees of courts were, it is clear, carefully engrossed by the officials, probably upon parchment, every outward formality being observed, while justice itself was set at nought.

Ver. 2.—**The poor . . . the widow . . . the fatherless.** These were the classes who were the chief sufferers by the perversion of justice (comp. ch. i. 17, 23). They were exactly the classes for whom God had most compassion, and whom he had commended in the Law to the tender care of his people (see note on ch. ix. 17).

Ver. 3.—**What will ye do in the day of visitation?** "The day of visitation" is the day when God reckons with his servants, and demands an account from each of the work done in his vineyard, being prepared to recompense the good and punish the bad (comp. Hos. ix. 7). It is oftenest used in a bad sense because, unhappily, so many more are found to deserve punishment than reward. **The desolation which shall come from far**; rather, *the crashing ruin* (Cheyne). It is sudden, and complete destruction, rather than mere desolateness, that is threatened. Previous prophecies, especially ch. vii. 17—20, had informed the Jews that it was to "come from far," "by them that were beyond the river." **To whom will ye flee?** The prophet speaks in bitter irony. Is there any one to whom ye can flee? any one who can protect you from the wrath of God? Ye well know there is no one. **Where will ye leave your glory?** With whom will ye deposit your riches, your magnificence, your jewels, your grand apparel? You cannot save them. They will all make to them-

selves wings, and "fly away like a bird" (Hos. ix. 11).

Ver. 4.—**Without me.** That this is a possible rendering of the word used seems proved by Hos. xiii. 4. But here it scarcely suits the context. God does not speak directly, in the first person, elsewhere in the entire prophecy (ch. ix. 8—x. 4), but is spoken of in the third person throughout, as even in the present verse, where we have "*his* anger," "*his* hand." It is better, therefore, to give the word its ordinary meaning—"unless," "except." Have they anywhere to flee to, unless they shall crouch amid the captives that are being carried off, or fall amid the slain? In other words, there is no escape for them; they must either submit to captivity or death. **For all this,** etc. Even when the two kingdoms were destroyed, and the captivity of both was complete, God's wrath was not fully appeased, his anger was not wholly turned away. Both peoples suffered grievous things in their captivity, as appears from the Book of Daniel (ch. iii., vi.) and other places. It took seventy years for God's anger to be appeased in the case of Judah (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21), while in the case of Israel it was never appeased. Crushed beneath the iron heel of their conquerors, Israel ceased to exist as a nation.

SECTION V. PROPHECIES OF WOE UPON FOREIGN NATIONS (CH. X. 5—XXIII.)

Vers. 5—19.—ASSYRIA, AFTER BEING GOD'S INSTRUMENT TO PUNISH ISRAEL, SHALL HERSELF BE PUNISHED IN HER TURN. The wicked are a sword in the hand of God (Ps. xvii. 13), wherewith he executes his judgments; but this fact is hid from them, and they imagine that they are successful through their own strength and might. So it was with Assyria (vers. 5—14), which its long career of victory had made proud and arrogant above measure. God now, by the mouth of Isaiah, makes known his intention of bringing down the pride of Assyria, and laying her glory in the dust, by a sudden and great destruction (vers. 15—19), after she has served his purposes.

Ver. 5.—**O Assyrian;** literally, *Ho! Asshur.* "Asshur" is the nation personified, and is here addressed as an individual. The transition from vers. 1—4 is abrupt, and may be taken to indicate an accidental juxtaposition of two entirely distinct prophecies. Or Assyria may be supposed to have been in the prophet's thought, though not in his words, when he spoke of "prisoners" and "slain" in the first clause of ver. 4. **The rod of mine anger** (comp. Jer. li. 20, where it is said of Babylon, "Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war; for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy the kingdoms"). So Assyria was now the "rod" wherewith God chastised his enemies. The true "staff" in the hand of Assyria, wherewith she smote the peoples, was "God's indignation."

Ver. 6.—**I will send him against an hypocritical nation;** or, *against a corrupt nation.* Israel in the wider sense, inclusive of Judah, seems to be intended. **The people of my wrath;** *i.e.* "the people who are the object of my wrath." **Will I give him a charge.** In 2 Kings xviii. 25 Sennacherib says, "Am I come up without the Lord (Jehovah) against this place, to destroy it? The Lord (Jehovah) said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it" (compare below, ch. xxxvi. 10). It has been usual to consider Sennacherib's words a vain boast; but if God instructed Nebuchadnezzar through dreams, may he not also by the same means have "given charges" to Assyrian monarchs? **To take the spoil, and to take the prey;** rather, *to gather spoil, and seize prey.* The terms used carry the thoughts back to ch. viii. 1—4, and to the symbolic name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. **And to tread them down;** literally, *to make it a trampling.* "It" refers to "nation" in the first clause.

Ver. 7.—**Howbeit he meaneth not so.** "Assyria," *i.e.*, "does not view the matter in this light—is not aware that she is merely God's instrument in working out his will. On the contrary, it is in her heart to destroy the nations for her own advantage, and she imagines that she is doing it by her own strength."

Ver. 8.—**Are not my princes altogether kings?** One mark of the superiority of Assyria to other countries was to be seen in the fact that her king had not mere officers, but vassal kings under him. Hence the title "king of kings" assumed by so many Assyrian monarchs. While conquered territories were by degrees and to a certain extent absorbed into the empire and placed under prefects (see the 'Eponym Canon'), an outer zone of more loosely organized dependencies was always maintained by the Assyrians; and these dependencies continued ordinarily to be administered by their native monarchs (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 524—526). These are the "princes" who were "altogether kings."

Ver. 9.—**Is not Calno as Carchemish?** A further proof of superiority, and ground of confidence, lay in the further fact, that the strongest cities had, one and all, succumbed

to the Assyrian arms, and been laid in ruins to punish them for offering resistance. Six such cities are mentioned—**Calneh**, probably Niffer, in Lower Mesopotamia; Carchemish, on the right bank of the Euphrates in Lat. 36° 30′ nearly; **Hamath**, the "great Hamath" of Amos (vi. 2), in Cœlesyria on the Orontes; Arpad, perhaps Tel-Erfad, near Aleppo; Damascus, and Samaria. **Calneh** was one of the cities of Nimrod (Gen. x. 10), and, according to the LXX., was "the place where the tower was built." It may have been taken by Tiglath-Pileser in one of his expeditions into Babylonia. Amos (vi. 2) speaks of it as desolate in his day. **Carchemish** (Assyrian *Gargamis*) was a chief city of the Hittites, and has been called "their northern capital." Long confounded by geographers with Circesium at the junction of the Khabour with the Euphrates, it has recently been proved to have occupied a far more northern position, and is now generally identified with the ruins discovered by Mr. George Smith at Jerabis or Jerablus. It was conquered by Sargon in B.C. 717, when "its people were led captive, and scattered over the Assyrian empire, while Assyrian colonists were brought to people the city in their place; Carchemish being formally annexed to Assyria, and placed under an Assyrian governor" (G. Smith, 'Assyria,' p. 97). **Hamath** was originally a Canaanite city (Gen. x. 18). By the time of David it had become the seat of an independent monarchy (2 Sam. viii. 9, 10), and so continued until its reduction by the Assyrians. We find it leagued with the Hittites, the Syrians of Damascus, and the Israelites against Assyria about B.C. 850 ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 361—363). About B.C. 720 it was taken by Sargon, who beheaded its king, and probably reduced it to ruins (ibid., p. 411; comp. Amos vi. 2). The name remains in the modern *Hamah*, where many curious inscriptions have been recently dug up. **Arpad** was attacked by Tiglath-Pileser in the early part of his reign, and reduced to subjection. It revolted in conjunction with Hamath from Sargon, and was severely punished ('Ancient Monarchies,' *l. s. c.*). **Is not Samaria as Damascus?** This mention of Samaria among the subjugated and ruined cities *may* undoubtedly be prophetic; but the connection with Carchemish, Hamath, and Arpad—all of them towns reduced by Sargon within the years B.C. 720—717—points rather to the verse being historical, and would seem to indicate that the date of the entire prophecy—vers. 5—19—is subsequent to the capture of the cities, and so not earlier than B.C. 716.

Ver. 10.—**As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols.** "Found" here means "reached," "punished," "subjugated." It is quite in accordance with Assyrian ideas that the conquered countries should be called "kingdoms of the idols" (literally, "no gods"). The Assyrian monarchs regarded their own gods as alone really deserving of the name, and made war very much with the object of proving the superiority of their deities over those of their neighbours. Hence their practice of carrying off the idols from the various cities which they conquered, or else of inscribing on them "the praises of Asshur." **And whose graven images**; rather, *and their graven images*. **Did excel.** In preciousness of material or in workmanship, or both. The Assyrians went near to identifying the idols with the gods themselves. **Those of Jerusalem and of Samaria.** The chief Samaritan idols were the golden calves at Dan and Bethel; but, in addition to these, "images and groves were set up in every high hill and under every green tree" (2 Kings xvii. 10), images of Baal, and Ashtoreth, and perhaps Beltis, and Chemosh, and Moloch. Even in Judah and in Jerusalem itself there were idols. Ahaz "made molten images for Baalim" (2 Chron. xxviii. 2). The brazen serpent was worshipped as an idol at Jerusalem until Hezekiah destroyed it; and probably, even after the reformation of Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 4), many Jews retained privately the images which he required them to destroy (2 Chron. xxxi. 1). Isaiah had already declared, speaking of Judah rather than of Israel, "Their land is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made" (ch. ii. 8).

Ver. 11.—**Shall I not . . . so do to Jerusalem and her idols?** The speaker ignores the fact of any difference in kind between the religion of Judæa and that of the neighbouring countries. He speaks as if he knew nothing of any religion without idols. No doubt Assyrian ideas on the subject of the religion of the Jews were at this time, as they were even later (2 Kings xviii. 22), exceedingly vague and incorrect.

Ver. 12.—**Wherefore**; rather, *but*. The final result shall be such as "the Assyrian" little expected. **When the Lord hath performed his whole work.** The "work" assigned to Assyria was the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, and a share in the trial, punishment, and discipline of Judah. The last task seems to have been the humiliation of Manasseh, which brought about his repentance (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—13). Soon after this the troubles began which led to her destruction. **I will punish.** The sudden change from the third to the first person is harsh and abnormal, but not without parallels in other passages of Isaiah (see ch. iii. 1—4; v. 3, 4, etc.). **The fruit of the**

stout heart; *i.e.* the notions, language, etc., which flowed from the stoutness of heart—such language, *e.g.*, as that of vers. 8—11 and 13, 14. **Of the King of Assyria.** The menace is not levelled against any one particular king, as Sargon, or Sennacherib; but against the monarchy itself, which from first to last was actuated by the same spirit, and breathed the same tone, of pride, selfishness, and cruelty. (See the royal inscriptions, *passim*, which become more revolting as time goes on.)

Ver. 13.—**For he saith.** Neither this speech nor that in vers. 8—11, nor again that given in ch. xxxvii. 24, 25, is to be regarded as historical in the sense of being the actual utterance of any Assyrian monarch. All are imaginary speeches, composed by the prophet, whereby he expresses in his own language the thoughts which Assyrian kings entertained in their hearts. **I have removed the bounds of the people**; rather, *of peoples*. Assyrian monarchs take as one of their titles "the remover of boundaries and landmarks" (G. Smith's 'Assyrian Discoveries,' pp. 243, 244). **And have robbed their treasures** (comp. 2 Kings xv. 19; xviii. 14—16). The plunder of conquered countries is constantly recorded by the Assyrian monarchs as one of the most important results of each successful expedition. It is not unfrequently represented in the sculptures (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 85). **I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.** The passage is obscure; and many different renderings have been given. Perhaps the best is that of Mr. Cheyne, "I have brought down, like a mighty one, those that sat on thrones." *Abbir*, however, the word translated "a mighty one," as often means "a bull" (see Ps. xxii. 12; l. 13; lxviii. 30; ch. xxxiv. 7; Jer. l. 11).

Ver. 14.—**My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people**; rather, *of the peoples*. The Assyrians are fond of comparing their enemies to birds ('Records of the Past,' vol. vii. pp. 36, 62, etc.); but the exact metaphor here used does not, I believe, occur in the inscriptions. The nations' treasures are like eggs found in deserted nests, which the hunter gathers without any, even the slightest, risk. **All the earth.** Oriental hyperbole. Assyrian monarchs often say that they "have subdued all the races of men," or "carried the glory of their name to the ends of the earth," or "overthrown the armies of the whole world in battle." **Peeped**; rather, *chirped* (see note on ch. viii. 19). None of the inhabitants offered even such feeble resistance as a bird makes when its nest is robbed.

Ver. 15.—**Shall the axe boast itself?** Here the prophet takes the word, and rebukes Assyria for her folly in forgetting, or not perceiving, that she is a mere instrument, like an axe, a saw, a rod, or a staff. **The saw . . . him that shaketh it**; rather, *him that moveth it to and fro*. The action of sawing is alluded to. **As if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up**; rather, *as if a rod were to move them to and fro that lift it up*. For Assyria to assert herself as if she were independent of God is like a rod attempting to sway the hand that holds it. It is a complete inversion of the natural order of things. Or **as if the staff should lift up** itself, as if it were no wood. Translate, *or as if a staff should lift up that which is not wood*; i.e. "as if a staff should take action and lift up its holder, who is not wood, but flesh and blood."

Ver. 16.—**Therefore shall the Lord . . . send among his fat ones leanness.** A continuation of ver. 12, showing what the nature of Assyria's punishment shall be. The prophet expresses it by two images—first, that of a wasting sickness; and secondly, that of a fire. The first image expresses that gradual decay of national spirit which saps the vital strength of a nation; the second is more suited to denote some external attack under which the weakened nation should succumb. There are traces, in the later history of Assyria, both of increasing internal weakness through luxury and effeminacy, and of violent external attacks culminating in the combined Median and Babylonian invasion, before which her power collapsed (Abyden. ap. Euseb., 'Chron. Can.,' pars i. c. ix.; Syncell., 'Chronograph.,' p. 210, B; Tobit xiv. 15).

Ver. 17.—**The light of Israel.** A new name of God. The idea on which it is based may be found in the Psalms (xxvii. 1; lxxxiv. 11), and again in Isaiah (lx. 19). God enlightens his people, cheers them, comforts them spiritually, as the light of the sun enlightens, cheers, and comforts men physically. Christ, as true God, is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). **Shall be for a fire.** As the same material fire which gives light, warmth, and comfort may burn and destroy, so the spiritual light, finding fit material, scorches and consumes. The fire which devours Assyria is to be kindled by God. **His Holy One**; *i.e.* "the Holy One of Israel" (see ch. i. 4). **It shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers.** The destruction of Assyria shall resemble that of Israel, in which Assyria was the instrument (ch. ix. 18). It shall be as complete, as terrible, and as final. **In one day.** Scarcely "in one battle" (Cheyne); for the destruction of Assyria was effected by many battles, many sieges, and much exhausting ravage. "In one day" rather means "at one and the same time,"

"within a brief space." It is not to be taken literally.

Ver. 18.—**Forest . . . fruitful field.** "Forest" and "fruitful field" (*carmel*) are sometimes united together, sometimes contrasted. Literally, they denote wild and cultivated woodland. Used symbolically, as here, they are not so much intended to designate different parts of Assyria's glory, as to convey the idea that the destruction will be universal. **Both soul and body.** Here metaphor is suddenly dropped, and Isaiah shows that he is speaking of the Assyrian *people*, not of the land or its products. Their destruction, wicked as they were, would be one both of body and soul. **As when a standard-bearer fainteth**; rather, *as when one that is faint fainteth.* Utter prostration and exhaustion is indicated, whichever way the passage is translated.

Ver. 19.—**The rest of the trees**; *i.e.* those that escape the burning—**shall be few**; literally, *a number*; i.e. so few that their number shall be apparent.

Vers. 20—34.—CONSOLATION FOR THE FAITHFUL IN ISRAEL. The destruction of Assyria shall be followed—how soon, is not said—by the return of a "remnant of Israel," not so much to their own land, as to God (vers. 20, 21). The remnant, however, shall be *but* a remnant—judgment shall have overtaken the bulk of the people (vers. 22, 23). Still, there is reason for the faithful to take courage and be of good heart; Assyria will shortly receive a check (vers. 24—27)—when her armies swoop upon Jerusalem, God will swoop down on her (vers. 28—34).

Ver. 20.—**In that day**; *i.e.* "at that time"—the time of the destruction of Assyria. **The remnant of Israel** (see ch. i. 9). Isaiah had indicated his firm belief in the existence of this faithful remnant and its return, in the name which he had given to his son, Shear-Jashub (see note on ch. vii. 3). **The escaped.** Those who escape from the destruction to be caused by the Assyrian invasion. **Shall no more again stay upon him that smote them.** We are told in the Second Book of Chronicles (xxviii. 23) that Ahaz "sacrificed to the gods of Damascus *which smote him*"—and we know that he also trusted to Tiglath-Pileser, who "distressed him and strengthened him not" (2 Chron. xxviii. 21). Among the "remnant" there shall be no such mistaken confidences. **But shall stay upon the Lord**; *i.e.* "shall put their trust in God, and him **only**" (comp. 2 Sam. xxii. 19; Ps. xviii. 18).

Ver. 21.—**The mighty God** (comp. ch. ix. 6). The name is not, however, Messianic in this place.

Vers. 22, 23.—These verses are exegetical of the term "remnant," and bring out its full force. The promise had been made to Abraham that his seed should be "like the sand of the sea for multitude" (Gen. xxii. 17). This promise had been fulfilled (1 Kings iv. 20); but now the sins of the people would produce a reversal of it. It would be a remnant, *and only a remnant*, of the nation that would escape. Judah would have to make a fresh start as from a new beginning (see Ezra ii. 64).

Ver. 22.—**The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness**; rather, *the consummation* (Dan. ix. 27) *determined on is one that overflows with righteousness* (comp. ch. xxviii. 22). The prophet means that God is about to visit the land in such a spirit of severe justice that it cannot be expected that more than a remnant will survive the awful visitation.

Ver. 23.—**The Lord . . . shall make a consumption**; rather, *a consummation—a final and decisive end of things.* **Even determined**; *i.e.* "determined on beforehand." **In the midst of all the land.** "Throughout the entire land," not merely in some portions of it.

Ver. 24.—**O my people . . . be not afraid.** God now addresses those who are faithful to him among the people; *they* have no need to fear—he will bring them safely through all the coming troubles. **He shall smite thee**; rather, *if he smite thee*; or, *though he smite thee.* **After the manner of Egypt**; *i.e.* as the Egyptians did in the oppression that preceded the Exodus. The yoke of Assyria was heavy even upon the nations that submitted to her. She claimed to march her armies through their territories at her pleasure, and probably pressed men and cattle into her service. She exacted a heavy tribute, and otherwise "distressed" her many vassals.

Ver. 25.—**The indignation shall cease**; rather, *there shall be an end of wrath*; i.e. "my wrath against Israel shall come to an end"—Israel having been sufficiently punished. **And mine anger in their destruction**; rather, *and my anger shall be to their destruction*; i.e. to the destruction of the Assyrians (see the margin of the Revised Version).

Ver. 26.—**The Lord . . . shall stir up a scourge for him**; or, *lift up a scourge over him.* Isaiah uses the metaphor of the "scourge" again in ch. xxviii. 16, 18. It is rare in Scripture, though common among the Greek and Latin writers. **According to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb** (comp. ch. ix. 4). The "slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb" was that great destruction of the Midianites which was begun by the three hundred under Gideon, and com-

pleted by the men of Ephraim, whereof we have an account in Judg. vii. 19—25. Its counterpart in Assyrian history would seem to be the destruction of Sennacherib's army, as related in 2 Kings xix. 35. **As his rod was upon the sea.** An allusion to the drowning of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. This was a nearer parallel to the destruction of Sennacherib's army than the slaughter of the Midianites, since it was wholly miraculous. By "his rod" we may understand the rod of Moses, endued by God with miraculous powers (Exod. iv. 3, 4; xiv. 16, 27). **After the manner of Egypt**; *i.e.* "after the manner of his action in Egypt."

Ver. 27.—**The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing**; literally, *before the oil*; i.e. "the Anointed One"—primarily Hezekiah, "the anointed of the Lord" (2 Sam. xix. 21; 2 Kings xi. 12; Lam. iv. 20) for the time being, but with a further reference to the Messiah, who breaks all the bands of the wicked asunder, and casts away their cords from him (Ps. ii. 2, 3); and who is represented by each prince of the house of David, as he was by David himself.

Vers. 28—32.—This graphic portraiture of the march of an Assyrian army on Jerusalem is probably not historic, but prophetic. Isaiah sees it in vision (ch. i. 1), and describes it like an eye-witness. There are at present no sufficient means of deciding to what particular attack it refers, or indeed whether the march is one conducted by Sennacherib or Sargon. Sargon calls himself in one inscription "conqueror of the land of Judah" (Layard, 'Inscriptions,' xxxiii. 8), and the details of the present prophecy, especially ver. 9, suit the reign of Sargon rather than that of his son, so that on the whole it is perhaps most probable that some expedition of Sargon's is portrayed.

Ver. 28.—**He is come to Aiath.** "Aiath" is probably Ai (Josh. viii. 1—28), with a feminine termination. It lay about three miles south of Bethel, which had become Assyrian with the conquest of Samaria. If an Assyrian army mustered at Bethel, it would naturally enter Judæan territory at Ai. **He is passed to Migron**; rather, *he has passed through Migron*. "Migron" is mentioned as a village in the territory of Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Sam. xiv. 2); but the Migron of this passage must have been further to the north. **He hath laid up his carriages**; *i.e.* "has left his baggage-train." Michmash was about seven miles nearly due north of Jerusalem. The heavy baggage might conveniently be left there, especially as it was difficult of attack (1 Sam. xiv. 4—13), while a lightly equipped body of troops made a dash at Jerusalem.

Ver. 29.—**They are gone over the passage.** The "passage of Michmash" (1 Sam. xiii. 23)—the deeply sunken valley, called now the *Wady Suweinit*, between Michmash (*Mukkmas*) and Geba (*Jeba*). **They have taken up their lodging at Geba**; or, *at Geba they rest for the night*. Having crossed the wady, they bivouac on the crest of the hills enclosing it on the south. **Ramah . . . Gibeah of Saul.** Ramah is, no doubt, *Er-Ram*, a village on an eminence, as the name implies, about six miles north of Jerusalem, and on the direct road from Beitin. Gibeah of Saul is thought to have occupied the site of the modern *Tuleil-el-Ful*, two miles nearer Jerusalem. It is certainly a distinct place from Geba. The inhabitants evacuate these two places during the night.

Ver. 30.—**Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim.** Gallim and Laish must have been villages between Geba and Jerusalem; but it is impossible to fix their site. Anathoth (now *Anata*) obtains mention in Joshua as a city of refuge in the territory of Benjamin (Josh. xxi. 18). It was Jeremiah's birthplace (Jer. i. 1). Gallim was the birthplace of the man who became the second husband of Michal, Saul's daughter. Laish is not elsewhere mentioned. **Cause it to be heard unto Laish**; rather, *hearken, O Laisha*.

Ver. 31.—**Madmenah . . . Gebim.** These are, like Gallim and Laisha, villages otherwise unknown. They must have been within a mile or two of Jerusalem, towards the north. Their inhabitants fly as the Assyrians approach.

Ver. 32.—**As yet shall he remain at Nob that day**; literally, *yet that day (is he) at Nob to halt*. The Assyrians pitch their camp at Nob, the priestly city destroyed by Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 19), which was evidently within sight of Jerusalem. Major Wilson's conjecture, that it occupied the site of the later Scopus, is probable.

Ver. 33.—**The Lord . . . shall lop the bough with terror.** A check to the Assyrian arms is intended, but of what nature is not clear. The "lopping of the bough *with terror*" might indicate a panic, such as that which seized the Syrians and made Benhadad II. raise the siege of Samaria (2 Kings vii. 6, 7). But the expressions used later on, "hewn down," "cut down," "shall fall," rather imply a defeat.

Ver. 34.—**He shall cut down**; or, *one shall cut down*; Jehovah being, no doubt, intended. **Lebanon** (comp. Ezek. xxxi. 3, "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon"). Here the comparison is enlarged, and Assyria appears as Lebanon itself with all its cedar woods. **By a mighty one**; rather, *a glorious one* (comp. ch. xxxiii. 21, where the word here used—*adir*—is an epithet of Jehovah).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*God is man's only sure Refuge in the day of calamity.* "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Ps. xlvi. 1—3). So sang the psalmist, and so Israel and Judah felt, so long as they clung to the worship of Jehovah, and served him, and strove to keep his laws. As their fidelity wavered, and they grew cold in his service, and allowed themselves to be attracted by the sensuous religions of the nations around them, their trust in Jehovah departed, and they could no longer look to him as a Refuge. Whither, then, should they look? Should it be to the gods of the nations? or to foreign alliances? or to their own strong arms and dauntless hearts?

I. FALSE GODS NO SURE REFUGE. Ahaz at one time "sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which smote him" (2 Chron. xxviii. 23), thinking to obtain help from them; but "they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel." Other kings of Judah and Israel trusted in Baal, or Chemosh, or Moloch, or Beltis, or Ashtoreth. But none found any of them a "sure refuge." Indeed, how should false gods help, when they are either fictions of the imagination, mere nonentities, or else evil spirits, rebels against the Almighty, cast down by him from heaven? If the former, they can have no power at all, for how should something come out of nothing? If the latter, they are powerless, at any rate against God, who has proved their inability to resist him, and could at any time annihilate them by a word.

II. THE KINGS OF THE EARTH NO SURE REFUGE. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man, for there is no help in them" (Ps. cxlvi. 3). Hoshea trusted in Shebek of Egypt (So), Hezekiah in Tirhakah, Zedekiah in Pharaoh-Hophra (Apries); but all were equally disappointed. Even Ahaz obtained no real advantage from his appeal to Tiglath-Pileser, who "distressed him, but strengthened him not" (2 Chron. xxviii. 20). Foreign aid is always a poor thing to trust to; for the foreigner necessarily consults mainly his own interest, which he may find to conflict with ours at any moment. Let all go well, and an obligation is incurred, which it may cost us more than we bargained for to repay. Let things go ill, and we experience perhaps the fate of the horse when he called in man's aid against the stag. In the best case, foreign powers can help us only against man, not against God. They can never be a "sure refuge." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" (ch. ii. 22).

III. MEN'S OWN STRONG ARMS AND STOUT HEARTS NO SURE REFUGE. Better certainly to trust to these than to false gods or fickle princes. In many a strait, these will help us a long way. But let there come a time of serious trouble, of overpowering hostile force pressing upon a nation, or deep grief or dangerous sickness upon an individual, and their weakness and insufficiency is at once shown. In the one case, the strong man has met with a stronger, and all his struggles do but add to his sufferings. In the other, the heart and hands fail when the call is made on them. The stalwart frame is bowed down with grief or illness; the heart is "withered like grass" (Ps. cii. 4), or become "like wax that is melted" (Ps. xxii. 14). Man discovers under these circumstances that he has no strength in himself, and, unless he can find an external refuge, is lost absolutely. Happy they who at such times can feel with David, "The Lord is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation, and my high Tower" (Ps. xviii. 2). "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for *thou* art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 1—4).

Vers. 5—19.—*Assyria, a notable example of pride and its punishment.* History furnishes no better example of pride and its punishment than that of Assyria. The pride of the Assyrians is equally apparent in Scripture and on the native monuments.

I. ASSYRIA'S PRIDE AS SHOWN FORTH IN SCRIPTURE. 1. In Rabshakeh's embassy (2 Kings xviii. 19—35). Rabshakeh not only scoffs at the military power of Judæa and Egypt, but ridicules the idea that Jehovah can deliver Jerusalem if the Assyrians attack it. "Hearken not unto Hezekiah," he says, "when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" 2. In the words by which Isaiah expresses what was in the heart of Assyrian kings, in ch. x. 8—11, 13, 14, and ch. xxxvii. 24, 25.

II. ASSYRIA'S PRIDE AS INDICATED BY THE MONUMENTS. Here we may note: 1. The titles assumed by the kings, which are such as the following: "the great king" (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 19, 28), "the powerful king," "the king of kings," "the lord of lords," "the supreme monarch of monarchs," "the favourite of the great gods," "the illustrious chief who is armed with the sceptre and girt with the girdle of power over mankind," and the like. 2. The contempt poured upon adversaries, who are "wicked people," "impious heretics," "enemies of Asshur," "traitors," and "rebels." 3. The claim to a series of uninterrupted successes, without notification of a single defeat, or even check, as ever suffered by the Assyrian arms. Their pride forbids the monarchs to allow that they ever experience a reverse.

III. ASSYRIA'S PUNISHMENT. The downfall of Assyria is sudden, strange, abnormal. She seems at the zenith of her power, stretching out her arm on the one side to Ethiopia, on the other to Lydia and the coasts of the Ægean, when, almost without warning, her glory suffers eclipse. A wild nation from the north, previously almost unknown, invades her land, devastates her fields, threatens her towns, destroys her material prosperity. Scarcely has this visitation passed by, when she is attacked from the east. An old enemy, long contended with and long despised, has in some wonderful way increased in strength, and assumes a menacing attitude. She trembles, but she puts on a bold face and confronts the danger. Summoning to her aid the forces of her subject allies, she retires within the strong walls of her capital city, and there awaits attack. But the chief of the subject allies deserts her standard, leagues itself with her main enemy, and joins in the siege of Nineveh. After a stubborn defence the city falls, and with it the empire, which has lasted nearly seven centuries. The downfall is strange, sudden, tragic, astonishing. Scripture alone reveals its cause. Scripture puts it before us as God's doing—his judgment on Assyria's pride, his predetermined and distinctly predicted punishment. Because "the axe boasted itself against him that hewed therewith, and the saw magnified itself against him that moved it" (ver. 15), "therefore the Lord, the Lord of hosts, sent among Assyria's fat ones leanness, and under her glory kindled a burning like the burning of a fire," and she was consumed, "soul and body," and ceased to be a nation.

The warning may well be taken to heart by modern countries, which set themselves against God; by modern scientists, who in the pride of their intellect deny God; and by the irreligious generally, who *practically* deny and defy him.

Ver. 27.—*Blessings through the anointing.* Blessings come to men "through the anointing" in a twofold way: (1) indirectly, through the anointing of Jesus; (2) directly, through their own anointing.

I. THROUGH THE ANOINTING OF JESUS. The anointing of Jesus was that complete sanctification of his human nature by the Holy Spirit, which resulted from his most close and perfect union with the other Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, whereby his human nature was never left an instant without the Spirit's gracious influence, but was ever, as it developed itself, sanctified in every part to the highest degree possible. 1. Hence comes to us the blessing of having a perfect Pattern, and *that* a personal one. Abstract standards of virtue are all more or less imperfect, and are weak to move us; they create no enthusiasm; they draw forth no love. We need a personal standard—an example whom we may imitate, a master whom we may admire, a friend whom we may cherish in our heart of hearts. Ancient philosophers told men who were striving to be good, to look out for the most virtuous man whom they could find, and then

imitate him. But every merely human model was imperfect; each led his followers more or less astray. It is our happiness to have a perfect Model—a real Person; One whose character is so clearly depicted that we cannot mistake it; One whom we may feel to be indeed a Friend; One whom we may at once revere and love. 2. We have, further, through the anointing of Jesus, the blessing of a full and complete satisfaction and atonement for all our sins. No atonement for the sins of others could be made but by a spotless sacrifice. Jesus was spotless, "through the anointing." It is thus "through the anointing" only that we have our perfect confidence in reconciliation having been made for us, our sins blotted out, and our pardon obtained from an offended God, who will receive us *in his Son and for his Son's merits.*

II. THROUGH MEN'S OWN ANOINTING. "We have an unction from the Holy One" (1 John ii. 20), if we are Christians at all, and through that unction obtain more blessings than we can enumerate; as (1) comfort and encouragement from him who is "*the* Comforter" (John xiv. 26), who encourages humble souls, and cheers up those who are depressed, and infuses hope into those who are ready to despair of their salvation; (2) strength from One who is stronger than man, who can enter into our hearts, and give us the power both to will and to do of his good pleasure; (3) release from the bondage of sin through the "free Spirit," who is able to overcome Satan, and release us from slavery to evil habits, and make us free and willing servants of God; (4) light and knowledge of the truth from him who is "the Spirit of truth," among whose gifts are wisdom, and knowledge, and faith, and discerning of spirits, and prophecy (1 Cor. xii. 8—10); (5) holiness from "the Sanctifier," the Holy Spirit—the "Spirit of holiness" (Rom. i. 4). The anointing of the Holy Spirit once received through the mercy of God, naturally and almost necessarily, unless we grieve and vex the Spirit by our perversity, abides in us (1 John ii. 27), and teaches us, and guides us, and strengthens and sustains us, and purifies our hearts and lives, and enables us to grow in grace, and press on ever towards the mark of our high calling in Christ, and become more and more conformed to the image of him to whom God gave not his Spirit "by measure" (John iii. 34).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5—15.—*Assyria the rod of Jehovah.* I. A WARLIKE POWER MAY BE THE PENAL INSTRUMENT OF PROVIDENCE. Assyria is here described as the "staff of Jehovah's anger," the "rod of his wrath," appointed to march against a people who have excited the Divine indignation. As he plunders and spoils, and proceeds on his devastating way, he may be in effect like Attila, the "scourge of God," destined like a wholesome tempest to purify the moral air of a corrupt age, and to prepare for a better sanitary state.

II. YET HE WHO IS BUT AN INSTRUMENT OF ANOTHER WILL MAY IGNORE HIS OFFICE AND WORK. The Assyrian's thoughts are bent on destruction. His motive is personal ambition. In haughty pride he not only overvalues his power, but mistakes its nature. His courtiers, he vaunts, are equal to kings. All foreign lands without distinction are to meet the same doom from him. As the heathen kingdoms of the north have been subdued by him, powerful and many as the gods had been, so the little kingdom of Judah, with its few gods or idols, will not be able to withstand him. As a heathen, the Assyrian recognizes, though in a mistaken way, the power of religion as the mainstay of a state. The idols or fetishes are to him the signs of a real supernatural power residing in the nation.

III. DIVINE DENUNCIATION OF VAIN-GLORY. When Jehovah executes his judgments at the right time, this insolent pride will be punished. 1. *Its folly exposed.* The prophet reads the heart of the vain-glorious conqueror. He is saying to himself, "It was the strength of my hand, it was the clearness of my own intelligence, that accomplished these victories, that cast down my powerful foes. I was like a boy pillaging a deserted nest." 2. *Its fallacy rebuked.* It is as if the axe should boast that it does the work of the hewer, or as if the saw were to brag against the sawyer, or the staff were to boast that it swings the hand of him who holds it—that the lifeless instrument raises the living hand. How deeply do these thoughts run through the lore of Israel down to Paul, who uses the image of the potter and the clay in a similar manner! Says Lord

Bacon, "It was prettily devised of Æsop; the fly sat upon the axletree of the chariot-wheel, and said, 'What a dust do I raise!' So there are some vain persons, that whatsoever goeth alone or moveth upon greater means, if they have ever so little hand in it, they think it is they that carry it." But

> "All service ranks the same with God—
> With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
> Are we; there is no last nor first."

J.

Vers. 16—23.—*Judgment and conversion.* I. FIGURES OF JUDGMENT. The Assyrian is viewed under the image of a stout, well-fed body, into which a wasting disease comes by Divine judgment. Again, that judgment is depicted as a flaming fire, kindling and devouring thorns and making a swift end to the towering beauty of the forest trees, the smiling pleasantness of the fruitful field. The remnant of the host will soon be counted "on one's fingers," as a boy might count the still standing stems in a wood devastated by the fiery element. The decline of a sick man, lastly, may represent the falling away of a nation's power. At best, what is humanity but a flower fading in its pride? As we read in the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus, "Its strength, is it strong; its beauty, is it fair? What hope have they, these dying briers, living one day long? How like a dream they go, this poor blind manhood, drifted from its end!" And in the light of moral disapproval, of Divine judgment, a declining nation seems to be under a blight, whose ravages cannot be checked. Where are the ancient civilizations, Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Greece, Rome? Their root was long ago cankered, and their blossom went up as dust. The explorer, digging out a statue here, or there deciphering an inscription, helps us to construct the picture of cities that were magnificent poems in stone, of a life to which no secret of pleasure or of power was denied. Were such heights in vain reached for mankind? Were yonder works of mighty kings the efforts of giants who fought against God? Rather let us say that it is he who both raises up and sets down—raises up to illustrate the greatness of the spirit of man, his breath; casts down to show the bitterness of human pride and the vanity of human ambitions. As we survey the remains of the "cloud-capp'd towers and gorgeous palaces" of Nineveh and Persepolis, we are reminded that all earth's splendour is but a dream, from which we must again and again awake anew, to find in the spiritual the only eternal; in the right the only enduring throne of potentates; in the sweet happiness of millions, not in the multitude of armed men, the mirror of God's will on earth.

II. CONVERSION THROUGH JUDGMENT. It was *false reliances* that corrupted Judah and Israel. As faith in the true objects of faith is nothing but strength, so the illusion which tempts us to trust where there is nothing in reality to lean on, must betray us. Men under such illusions will confide in their deadly enemy as a bosom friend; will invite the point of the weapon aimed at the heart; will "stay themselves upon them that smite them." We are limp, drooping creatures. Rare is he who walks with head quite erect, with eye undauntedly fixed on the unseen, with heart bound up in principle alone. If we crave countenance in our foibles, much more in our serious projects. And never was there craze, weakness, silliness, or sin, for which abettors may not be found. Never have we so sought confirmation in views that should never have been entertained, but the hour of disenchantment has come, soon or late. The reed breaks, the cistern leaks; the soft foundation gives, and the ominous crack appears in our dwelling. And then we return to "stay ourselves on the Holy One of Israel with faithfulness." Or so the prophet forecasts the effect of his people's disenchantment. "The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob to the Hero-God." He the only Head, the only Battle-leader, as the only Prince of Peace, will be found again in the day of adversity, at least by a few. As in the olden time but a few were saved in the ark from the great flood, so from these overflowing judgments which are to descend, a few, though only a few, will be able to escape. A public end and decision of these controversies between Jehovah and his people is to be made, and it cannot be delayed nor averted. 1. To the prophetic consciousness it seems, at any epoch, that "the whole world lies in wickedness," and that the righteous are but a very small remnant. 2. Historically, such a view seems to hold good. At critical epochs, England has probably been saved by the virtuous,

the Christian, the self-denying few. 3. But history is too profound for any mortal reading or rendering. If nations have passed away notwithstanding that they had a core of true hearts among them; if Israel still remains, though her lamp has been removed from its stand, there is, doubtless, a deeper meaning in the prophet's words. It is the "remnant" which has given us our Hebrew Scriptures. From the caldron of suffering, exile, external sorrow, came forth the fine gold of the great prophet of the Captivity, and of many of the psalmists. Every nation that leaves noble and Divine thoughts for the possession of mankind for ever; every individual who, out of the wreck of life's mistakes, bequeaths some legacy of truth to posterity, fulfils in a way the prophecies of the recovery of the remnant.—J.

Vers. 24—34.—*The mighty laid low.* I. ENCOURAGEMENT AGAINST FEAR. Let not Judah fear the Assyrian, who, like the Egyptian in the days of yore, wields over her the rod of the slave-driver. In a short time, the hot tide of Divine wrath will pass from Israel, and the Assyrians will in turn feel it. The scourge that was laid in the ancient time on the back of the Egyptian oppressor will be brandished over the heads of the Assyrians. Their burden will fall from Judah's shoulder, from Judah's neck the yoke. The proverb says, "A youth is ruined by fat," and so will the swollen bulk of the Assyrian body melt away. There is a play in the Hebrew on the words "yoke" and "youth." The prophet in a word-picture paints the onward march of the great host. Swiftly he comes on, spreading trembling and causing flight before him. Panic-struck clamours sound through the vales, and from hill to hill the alarum is given. Fugitives pour in through the gates of the city. Already the invader is at Nob, near Jerusalem, and has his hand lifted on high, as it were, to smite the sacred hill with a fatal blow. Then suddenly his own crown is cleft by the hand of Jehovah; the lofty crested warriors fall as the trees in the forest before the woodman's axe. This Lebanon of warlike spears, this *moles belli*, is prostrate before the "majestical One" whose seat is on Zion.

II. GENERAL LESSONS. There was an anointed king in Zion, the representation of Jehovah's majesty, then; there are spiritual forces, representative of Divine might and will, ruling in the world now. There were moments of prophetic insight in which the hollowness of worldly might, the doom of kingdoms that were not kingdoms of righteousness, were clearly seen. There are such moments now. What is force without justice, numbers without principle? One breath from the lips of eternal Truth shall suffice to drive them away. All that has fixed the eye of the people in fascinated terror, filled their ears with tumult, their hearts with commotion, dismayed not the prophet. He seems to look above, his feet securely planted upon a cliff, on the boiling surge below. There is a hand that can stay these waves, a voice that can command, "Thus far and no further; here shall thy proud billows be stayed." Then shall these hosts become such "stuff as dreams are made of," these onward-rolling columns melt into wreaths of cloud, become thin air, and "leave not a wrack behind."

> "The might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

Our cares and troubles may be to us personally as the invasion of an Assyrian host. If we would know the prophetic confidence, we must live the prophetic life; the ear attent, the heart obedient—"fixed, trusting in the Lord." Nothing can bring us peace, lift us out of the degradation of fears that unman, but faith in our principles. They must triumph in the end; in them alone is strength, freedom, victory.—J.

Vers. 1—4.—*The helplessness of man under the wrath of God.* The anger of the Lord is here expressly declared against the oppressor. We are again reminded: 1. That God judges those who are in authority over men; that however these may be placed above the reach of human justice, they will not escape Divine retribution. 2. That God especially requires an account of our treatment of the suffering and the dependent. Whoso wrongs the widow or the orphan must expect a fearful reckoning with the pitiful and righteous One (Matt. xviii. 6). But the special truth which is provided for us in this passage is the utter impotence of man, and the certainty and severity of his doom when God "arises to judgment." We learn—

I. THAT SIN IS MOVING ON TO A DAY OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. "The day of visitation" (ver. 3) is sure to come. The desolation that is in store may have to "come from far;" it may be out of sight now; it may come "as one that travelleth," may be hidden by intervening days and weeks; but it is on its way. Not more surely does the sun move to the western sky, does the spring move toward the summer, does youth move toward manhood and manhood toward age and death, than does sin move on to a day of wrath, of Divine visitation. All sin takes this sad course; not only such daring and presumptuous sin as that of the text—cruel wrong at the hand of those appointed to administer justice—but all departure from the revealed will of God, and also the deliberate and persistent refusal to enter his service.

II. THAT IN THAT DAY SIN WILL LEAN IN VAIN ON ITS OLD SUPPORTS. Not only will national alliances fail the nation which God is visiting with his displeasure, but all the supports and consolations with which individual souls have surrounded themselves will prove to be of no avail then. "To whom will ye flee for help?" (ver. 3). What human arm will arrest the uplifted hand of God? Of what avail then human friendships, abundant "resources," magnificent estates, royal or princely patronage, the devices of the cunning counsellor? How will these be brushed away by the tempest of his holy indignation!

III. THAT SIN WILL THEN BE EXPOSED TO A THREEFOLD PENALTY. 1. *Irreparable loss.* "Where will ye leave your glory?" (ver. 3). Our earthly treasures, our bodily powers, our worldly honours and positions,—these are things which God's punitive providence will take away from us; and where is the custodian to whose hands we can confide them? Who will receive them from us and restore them to us? 2. *Spiritual bondage.* "They shall bow down under the prisoners," or "bow down among the captives" (ver. 4). Sin leads down to a cruel bondage. Evil dispositions, bad habits, shameful lusts, "have dominion over us" (Rom. vi. 16). 3. *Spiritual death.* "They shall fall under the slain." We add the welcome truth, not stated or even hinted here, but elsewhere revealed—

IV. THAT THERE IS AN UNFAILING REFUGE NOW FOR THE PENITENT AND BELIEVING SPIRIT.—C.

Vers. 5—19.—*Man in his folly and God in his righteousness.* We have a graphic picture here of—

I. MAN IN HIS FOLLY. Under the dominion of the folly which is born of sin, man: 1. *Indulges in designs which are beyond his strength.* (Ver. 7.) It is "in his heart" to do much greater things, often to work much greater wickedness, than he has power to execute. Under sin, men indulge in great and even gross self-exaggeration; guilt is an infatuating thing. 2. *Looks with dangerous complacency on his little triumphs.* (Vers. 8, 9.) He has the "stout heart" and the "high looks" (ver. 12) which come from a consciousness of success, and which are the sure precursors of further folly. Few men can stand even the smaller triumphs, and still fewer the greater ones. When a man finds himself indulging the spirit of complacency he had better question himself severely, for he is walking on a "slippery place." 3. *Attributes to himself what is his only in a very slight degree.* (Ver. 13; *vide* 1 Cor. iv. 7.) Man can only work with the materials which he has received from God, under the conditions which God determines, within the limits which God imposes. "All our springs are in *him*." The attitude of arrogant authorship is as preposterous as it is offensive. 4. *Comes to hasty and ignorant conclusions.* (Vers. 10, 11, 14.) The blind Assyrian ignorantly associated the idols of other lands with "the idols of Jerusalem." He was either ignorant of Jehovah's Name, or he placed him on a level with other gods. He was going forth in a blind confidence that should be rudely shaken, that should be completely shattered. Man in his guilty folly assumes many things to be true which are absolutely false; he fails to make inquiry, and his ignorance utterly and fatally misleads him. And there is nothing in regard to which this is so true as the nature, the character, and the will of God. 5. *Is blind to the end and issue of his doings.* "He meaneth not so," etc. (ver. 7). Under the sway of sin man moves along a path which he thinks will lead to honour, enjoyment, success, triumph; but "the end of that way is death." Selfishness has its own purpose in view, and confidently reckons on achieving its end; but behind or above it is a Power which it is unable to resist, and which turns it to another and very different end.

II. GOD IN HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. Everywhere present, sleeplessly watching, mightily interposing, is the righteous Ruler of all. 1. *He punishes his own people when they go astray.* "I will send him against a hypocritical nation," etc. (ver. 6); "When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion" (ver. 12). Judgment often "begins at the house of God," with the people of God. Whom the Lord loves he chastens. God has a gracious purpose in his visitations; he desires and designs repentance and restoration, but he does not spare. He speaks of his own people as "the people of his wrath" (ver. 6). Let no "Christian nation," or "Christian Church," or Christian man wrap itself (himself) up in imaginary security. God may have a rod in his hand even for Judah as well as for Assyria. 2. *He will overwhelm with humiliation those who impiously oppose themselves to his holy will.* (Vers. 15—19.) 3. *He will use the ungodly as instruments in his hand of righteousness and power.* (Vers. 5—7.) Sennacherib should be the rod with which the hand of God would smite. God can make and will make the wrath and the ambition of men to serve the high purpose which he has in his mind. Thus he used Pharaoh, Cyrus, Pilate, and many others, who thought that their own aims were the ultimate issue that was being wrought out. (1) How unspeakably humiliating is the involuntary tribute God may compel us to render! (2) How immeasurably preferable is the willing service he invites us to offer!—C.

Vers. 20—23.—*Departure and return.* The passage suggests—

I. THAT THOSE WHO KNOW GOD WELL MAY BE INDUCED TO FORSAKE HIM. Israel had been well taught of God; had been carefully and constantly instructed in Divine truth; had received some lessons which might well have been deeply planted in the mind. Yet Israel forsook Jehovah; ceased to trust in his delivering arm, and sought alliance with Assyria. So we, who should know much better, forsake the Lord, of whose power, faithfulness, and love we have learned so much. Instead of finding our joy and our heritage in his service and friendship, we resort to the fascinations of a seductive world; instead of relying on his promised succour, we have recourse to human help or to material securities.

II. THAT EVERY EARTHLY REFUGE PROVES TO BE PRECARIOUS. Resting on Assyria, Israel was only "staying upon him that smote them." The staff on which they leaned proved to be a rod that bruised them. So has it been, again and again, with national and political alliances. So is it with our individual confidences in earth rather than in heaven. The *material securities* fail us; the ship sinks, the bank breaks, the mine is exhausted, the company is defrauded and has to be wound up, trade declines, and our earthly prop is gone. The *human help* we built upon disappears; our friend sickens, or he is killed in the fatal accident, or he is himself stripped and helpless, or he is estranged from us and discards us. Our hope becomes our disappointment, our pride becomes our shame; we have been staying on that which smites us (see Jer. xvii. 5; Ps. cxviii. 6—9; ch. xxxi. 1).

III. THAT GOD AWAITS THE RETURN OF HIS PEOPLE TO HIMSELF. "They shall stay upon the Lord;" "The remnant shall return unto the mighty God" (vers. 20, 21). Not only was God not unwilling that his people should return unto him, but he sent them their adversity in order that they might see their folly and incline their hearts unto himself. 1. God is grieved at our departure from himself, but he is willing to welcome us back. 2. He sends the adversity which is suggestive of our return. When the dark hour comes, when the soul sits desolate, when our heart is wounded by the very hand which we hoped would help and heal us, in that day may we hear the voice of the Father we have forsaken, calling to us and saying, "Return unto me;" "I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely."—C.

Vers. 24—34.—*Rout and re-establishment: Divine interposition.* I. THE APPEARANCE OF OVERWHELMING POWER ON THE SIDE OF SIN. The prophet gives a vivid description in vers. 28—38 of the triumphant march of the Assyrian. Everybody and everything yields at his approach; opposition melts before him; his adversary is in his power; already his hand is on the prize he seeks. Sin often seems to be on a march that is irresistible, and to be secure of victory. Numbers, wealth, learning, rank, riches, custom, habit,—the most powerful forces make up its conquering host.

Must not truth, virtue, piety, capitulate at its summons and leave their treasures to its impious hands? So was it with sin generally when the Saviour appeared, to lift up the standard of the cross against its power. So has it been, again and again, with the forces of superstition, scepticism, vice, ungodliness, as these have assailed some Church of Christ or some servant of God.

II. ITS ARREST AND OVERTHROW BY DIVINE POWER. Irresistible as the invading army seemed, its victorious course should be arrested and its confident anticipations dashed (vers. 26, 33, 34). The hand of the boastful warrior, outstretched in scornful threatening (ver. 32), should be smitten down and hang helpless. The smiter should himself be scourged, the proud palm disbranched, the great forest felled. Arrogant impiety should be humiliated, and "by the way that he came he should return." So has it been and thus shall it be, on still more serious and critical occasions. God will say to the spiritual adversaries, "Thus far . . . and no further." He will raise up the prophet—the Samuel, the Elijah, the John, the Paul, the Luther, the Wesley—or he will introduce the spiritual awakening and moral power which will encounter and defeat the worst efforts of sin and wrong, and impending defeat shall be changed into glorious victory.

III. THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Ver. 27.) The burden shall be removed from the shoulder, the yoke taken from the neck; there shall be comfort and freedom for the people of God, that they may walk again in the paths of righteousness, that they may serve again in the vineyard of the Lord. We learn three lessons: 1. *That successful sin may well hesitate* on its way and tremble for the issue. However appearances may favour it, and though the spoils may seem already in its hand, there is a Power to be reckoned with which will arrest its march and consume its hopes. 2. *That threatened uprightness may be reassured.* It need not be afraid of any Assyrian (ver. 24), if it continue in or return to its spiritual integrity. God's love for the faithful will remain; his indignation toward the erring who are the penitent will cease (ver. 25). 3. *That the removal of sinful servitude must be contemporary with the acceptance of holy and happy service.* (Matt. xi. 28—30).—C.

Ver. 2.—*The Divine avenger of the poor.* The idea of a *goel*, or avenger, belongs to the primitive conditions of society. When there was no settled government, no police, and no magistracy, each individual had to guard his life, liberty, and property as best he could. The first and simplest form that mutual protection took was "the family," and the principle was established that the nearest of kin to an injured or murdered person should avenge the injury or death. As this led to feuds among families and tribes lasting for generations, and as it was a kind of rough justice which often became injustice, Moses set the old custom under limitations, appointing proper courts for the settlement of disputes, and protecting the manslayer from the avenger until due examination could be made into the circumstances of his crime. In fully civilized society a regular system of law and magistracy is organized; the individual commits his right of personal avengement to the recognized authorities. It is, therefore, of supreme importance to the welfare of any nation that justice should be free to all, should be perfectly fair, and should be a practical avenger of the poor, the distressed, and the wronged. The picture which Isaiah sets before us in this passage reveals a most perilous condition of society. "All the formalities of justice were observed punctiliously. The decision of the unjust judge was duly given and recorded, but the outcome of it all was that the poor, the widow, and the fatherless got no redress." "No people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had, and yet corrupt judges found ways 'to turn aside the needy from judgment,' to hinder them from coming at their right and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by nor expect any bribes from." "There is no surer sign of the misery of a people than is found in the corrupt administration of justice." And it may be added that a country is on the borders of revolution, or of calamity, when righteousness has forsaken its judgment-seats, and there are no avengers of social wrongs.

I. THE STATE OF SOCIETY IN WHICH THE POOR FIND NO HELP IN MAN. Two cases are suggested. 1. Failure to obtain just judgment. 2. The painful condition of widows. Where there is wealth and luxury there is sure to be poverty in marked and

terrible features close beside it, as may be illustrated from the great and rich European cities of our day. Wealth has a tendency to go in the direction of classes; it drains away from some classes, and so alienates and embitters them, especially as the result of self-indulgence is to harden a man's heart against his neighbour. The condition of widows in the East is an extremely painful one, because they have no rights in their husband's property, no social status, and are the prey of designing and wicked men. The retired life they lead unfits them for contending on behalf of their own rights, or those of their children. The picture of a national life in which the wronged have no judge, the poor no helpers, and the widows no friends, is an exceedingly painful one. Self-seeking, luxury, and class prejudice must have eaten the heart out of such a kingdom.

II. IN SUCH A STATE OF SOCIETY THE POOR HAVE HELP IN GOD. This may be illustrated along the following lines. God will help them by: 1. *The working of his judgment-laws.* In Greece despised *helots* multiply, and become at last a destructive force, for a time breaking up society. Slaves learn at last to combine, and take their own avengements on their persecutors. Down-trodden races heave awhile, like slumbering earthquakes, and presently burst forth in revolutions that are, in reality, Divine judgments. 2. *By the orderings of Divine providence,* which bring the nation into such a condition that reformation of its wrongs becomes immediately necessary to secure its continued existence. 3. *By the raising up of human helpers.* Men who plead the cause of the poor, and make their voice and their condition to be heard even in the high places of a land. At once thought turns to such men as Wilberforce, the friend of the slave, and Howard, the friend of the prisoner. 4. *By special Divine consolations.* The poor have their ameliorations, and even their superior advantages; and not the least of them is this—they have little prejudice hindering the reception of Divine truth. To "the poor the gospel is preached," and in every age it is found true that "the common people heard Christ," and hear of Christ, "gladly."—R. T.

Vers. 5—7.—*The Divine overrulings.* The figure of Assyria as an aggrandizing power is here set before us. "About B.C. 1100, the rule of Assyria, under Tiglath-Pileser I., had stretched from Kurdistan to the Grecian Archipelago, including the whole of Lebanon and Phœnicia. But a strong league of the Hittite kings of Syria had effectually humbled it, and torn away from the successors of the great king all his dominions on this side the Euphrates. After a hundred and fifty years of obscurity, Assyria once more, in the middle of the ninth century B.C., under its warlike king, Assur-Nazirhabal, entered on a career of conquest, and cleared its home territories of their Babylonish garrisons. He was succeeded by his son, Shalmaneser II., who proved the Napoleon of his day. After conquering Babylonia, he marched in triumph to the shores of the Persian Gulf, and exacted tribute from the petty kings of Chaldæa. But these triumphs only kindled his military ardour. He now determined to extend his empire to the ancient grandeur it had obtained under Tiglath-Pileser I. The kingdom of Damascus and the states of Palestine were thus in imminent danger. A new era of mortal struggle had come to them—a struggle only to end, after an agony of more than a hundred years, in the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, and the degrading vassalage of all the nations from the Euphrates to the Levant. Henceforth all Western Asia trembled at the name of Assyria. The heavens were black with tempests, driving, with only momentary lulls, across the whole sweep of Syria and Palestine" (Dr. Geikie). Fixing attention on Assyria, we observe—

I. SELF-WILLED ASSYRIA, CARRYING OUT ITS OWN PLANS. Describe the historical facts. The poet seems to be watching this aggrandizing king determined to push his conquests to the Mediterranean, and become master of the world. The career and spirit of the first Napoleon are full of effective comparisons. The lust of conquest ever grows with success, and the Assyrian king had no more thought of God than Napoleon had. He simply meant to serve his own ends. These great world-conquerors are prominent examples of "taking life into our own ordering, and resolutely fashioning it to our own ends;" and they are examples, too, of the curse to all around, and the ruin to the man himself, of every self-willed life.

II. OVERRULED ASSYRIA CARRYING OUT GOD'S PLANS. What a supreme humiliation for conquering Assyria was this prophetic declaration! Assyria was, in actual fact, only carrying out the purpose of Jehovah, who was known to the Assyrians but as the

God of one of the little states which they would be obliged to overrun. Assyria and its proud king were only Jehovah's rod and staff, executing for him the fierceness of his indignation. Assyria was now as much the servant of God judging and punishing Syria and Israel, as the Hebrews had been the servants of God in exterminating the Canaanites, whose cup of iniquity had become full, and was running over. God makes "the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains."

III. THERE IS EVER CONSOLATION FOR GOD'S PEOPLE IN GOD'S OVERRULINGS. We should always try to look beyond man's little plan, and see how things fit into God's great plan. We may never be satisfied with what things *look like*, we should ask God to teach us what they *are*. There are no forces working in the moral or intellectual world of to-day which are out of God's range. We need never be despondent. The purposes of grace are overmastering purposes. It is always true that "man proposes, and God disposes." As practical appeal, show how important for us it is that we should be kin with God, fit into his purposes, and do his will, not just by his overruling and mastery, but by our own spirit of surrender, submission, and joyous service; never saying, "What shall I do?" but ever looking up to God and saying, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*God's judgments on pride.* "These are the sentiments and boastings of Sennacherib, a proud Assyrian monarch, who viewed and treated cities just as we in Africa viewed and treated ostrich-nests, when they fell in our way; we seized the eggs as if they had been our own, because we had found them, and because there was no power that could prevent us. So did Sennacherib seize and plunder cities with as little compunction as we seized the eggs of the absent ostrich; never thinking of the misery for life which he thereby brought on many peaceable families, who had done nothing to injure or offend him" (Campbell). Assyria did more than other conquering kingdoms in merging independent nationalities into one great empire. To be a "remover of boundaries and landmarks" was the title in which an Assyrian king most exulted.

I. THE PERIL OF SUCCESS IN LIFE IS PRIDE. Illustrated in Nebuchadnezzar, Solomon, etc. See the boastings in this passage.

II. PRIDE, KEPT WITHIN LIMITS, MAY BE CORRECTED BY ORDINARY AGENCIES. Such as failure, disappointment, falls into temptation, seasons of affliction. There is some measure of pride in us all, bringing us under God's chastening hand.

III. WHEN PRIDE COMES TO TAKE THE HONOUR THAT IS DUE TO GOD ALONE, IT MUST BE OPENLY HUMBLED. As in the cases of Nebuchadnezzar, Herod at Tyre, etc. And if God seems to delay in his humblings, we may be sure it is only that the proud man may get finished the work which, all unknown to himself, God is making him do. Then we may well learn to be always thankful for grace received, talents entrusted, opportunities given, and achievements won; but never *boast*, never either think or say, "I have done it;" "My arm hath gotten me this victory." Boast, if you must boast, like Paul, of what God has wrought in you and by you; but never boast of what you have wrought, for it is an ever-working and necessary law that "pride must have a fall," and the "Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Man, the instrument of God.* This passage is most humbling to that pride of man which leads him to say, "I am my own; I can do as I please with my own powers and life." That pride it breaks down by saying, "Not so; you are not your own; you are God's; he made you; he gives you all; he uses you for his own high purposes." The proudest, wealthiest, mightiest man on earth may seem to be something. In reality, what is he? An axe, a saw, a staff in the hands of God, to work out his will. How foolish for the axe to boast against the workman, or the staff to resist the living man who uses it! The truth which we propose to illustrate is, that man can never be other than the instrument of God, used by him for the accomplishment of his Divine purposes. We can find nothing else that God has created which is without a purpose and end for its being. Winds and waters, metals and rocks, flowers and trees, sunshine and showers, summer and winter, day and night, disease and death, all are God's tools. Not one insect hums in the summer evening but has received its commission from the Lord of heaven and earth. Not a flower opens its tinted bosom in the hedgerow but is obeying the voice of God. Not a

bird fans the air with its waving wing but hastens to do the Lord's bidding. The world is full of tools in the hands of God. As we ascend in the scale of creation we only find that higher beings have higher work to do; they are more subtle tools, set to do more skilful work, but they never cease to be tools. Man may be the crown of creation, but he is only a creature, and set to do God's most delicate and particular work. So far as we can understand the history of our world, we can see that great nations have been raised up to do certain things for God, and they have done them, either with their wills or against them. Egypt was raised up to educate the childhood of God's chosen people. Assyria was raised up, as we see in this chapter, to be the rod of God wherewith he might punish his people for their sin. Babylon was commissioned to guard the years of Jewish captivity. Greece was exalted to show the world that "the beautiful" is not, of necessity, "the good." Rome proved to the world that "restraint of law" can never take the place of the "liberty of righteousness." The Gothic nations were commissioned to overthrow a debased and worn-out civilization. France shows how the passion for "glory" can lead men astray. America illustrates the principles of self-government. England tells what can be achieved under the inspiration of duty. Every prominent man, who stands conspicuously out from his fellows, is a tool of God. Of Pharaoh it is said, "For this cause have I raised thee up, to make known my power in thee." Of Cyrus, who was appointed to arrange the return from captivity, it is said, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Every man's individuality is precisely arranged for God's purpose in him. It becomes a most oppressive thought that each one of us is not only a tool, but a tool of a specific kind, and shape, and weight, and force, and keenness, adapted and attempered for that precise work which God wants to do by us. What, then, shall we do with this fact, that man is the instrument of God? In what relation shall we stand to it?

I. WE MAY DENY THE FACT, AND MAKE THIS SUPPORT OUR REBELLION. Perhaps no one ever did, soberly and thoughtfully, say, "There is no God." Men say it in the bragging of their pride, as excuse for their wrong-doing; and by the self-pleasing of their lives; but Scripture reveals their secret when it says, "They do not *like* to retain God in their thoughts." The difficulty is moral, not intellectual. Even a bad man would hardly dare to say, "Even if there be a God, he has no rights in me; I am my own; I rule myself; I shall take care of myself for ever." And yet many a man's life does, in effect, say, "I am no axe, no saw, no staff, of God's; I will not be." "The axe boasteth itself against him that heweth therewith, and the saw magnifies itself against him that shaketh it." Scripture refers to such men. Nebuchadnezzar; Jonah; Assyria; Herod at Tyre. And what must always follow when the "potsherd strives against its Maker"?

II. WE MAY ACCEPT THE FACT, BUT PERVERT IT, AND SO MAKE OURSELVES INDIFFERENT TO MORAL DISTINCTIONS. A man may say, "Yes, I am a tool of God's; my life is all planned out for me; it is all fore-ordained where I shall be, what I shall do; therefore there can be no real difference between right and wrong; whatever I do I cannot help doing, I was intended to do; I am only the axe or the saw; the virtue lies only in him who uses me, and whose power I cannot resist." We are all exposed to the temptation of treating this sublime fact of God's relation to us in this most mournful and mistaken way. Losing the distinction between right and wrong out of our lives, we are in peril of losing God altogether as a moral Being, and transforming him into the "cloud-compelling Jove" of whom the pagans dreamed. Cannot we see that when God speaks of men as his axe or his saw, it is as using a symbol, which answers only in part? Man is not according to the nature of the axe or the saw; but his intelligence, his powers, his will, come into a relation of dependence on God and service to him, just as the saw does to man. God's higher will takes into account man's will, and would even work out its gracious plans through that human will.

III. WE MAY RECEIVE THIS FACT, AND MAKE IT NOURISH A DAILY OBEDIENCE. Was the life of the Apostle Paul a free, noble, blessed life? He was but a tool in the hands of God. "Go thy way; thou art a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles." He did not resist; he did not let the fact that he was God's tool lead him to indifference. He cheerfully accepted God's will for him; he fitted his will to God's will, and said, "Yes, the very best thing for me is just the thing that God requires of me, that I should go and preach to the Gentiles." Is there moral

glory in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth? It comes out of the fact that even he, in his earthly manifestation, was a tool in the hands of God, and liked to be a tool. He fitted his mind into the mind of God so as to say, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" "My meat and my drink is to do the will of my Father who is in heaven." The truth before us, in this our text, staggers and crushes us if we attempt to resist it. It is one rich indeed in comfort and help if we will accept it, fit our will and pleasure into God's will and pleasure for us, and say, "God's plan for me is my plan for myself. God's place, God's work, God's difficulties, God's sorrows, God's helps for me, are the very things that I would have chosen for myself, if I had wisdom enough to choose." The truth of the text will be a stumbling-block to us until we truly know God. Then it becomes to us a glory and a boasting. Why should the infant of a day be set to steer the vessel when the Lord of winds and seas is on board? Why should a stranger lead himself through the trackless forests of life when the all-seeing, all-knowing Father-God offers the guiding hand? What can be better for us than to be axe, saw, staff, in the hands of him who is good, wise, loving, strong, our Almighty Father?—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Staying upon the Holy One.* "The remnant of Israel, and the escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no longer rely upon smiter, but shall rely upon Jehovah, Israel's Holy One, in faithfulness" (Cheyne's translation). The point of the verse is that the remnant of Israel is thoroughly weaned from its false confidences, and returns to the true God. The only hope for preserving the liberties of Judah, Israel, and Syria was for them to combine against the growing power of Assyria. But, instead of that, Israel and Syria combined against Judah, and so both weakened their own hands, and drove Judah to seek the help of Assyria, which inevitably hastened the overthrow of all the three kingdoms. However politic the appeal of Judah to Assyria might seem to be, it was utterly unworthy of the people of Jehovah, who had so often proved his faithfulness and power; so they had, by bitter experience, to learn that they should "cease from man," and trust wholly in the living God (Jer. xvii. 5—8). "Their experience of the failure of that false policy should lead them to see that faith in God was, after all, the truest wisdom." From this we learn for ourselves that the sanctified experiences of our life will bring about the same results; self-trusts, and trusts in man, will be wholly broken down, and trust in God will be fully established. We may dwell on the following stages in the experience of life.

I. I CAN. This expresses the spirit of confidence, conscious strength, and hopefulness which characterizes *youth*. Nothing seems to be impossible. Life must yield its best to energy.

II. I WILL. This is man's first effort to meet the sense of failure. Things will not go just as he wishes. He cannot attain all he can desire. But at first he will not admit this. So he calls on will to buttress ability, and make united effort to master disability. The very energy of man's will is a half-confession of man's weakness.

III. I CANNOT. This is the issue of the strife, sooner or later, for every man. Strength and will try hard to shape life otherwise than God appoints; and however cheering temporary successes may prove, every year brings its disappointments and its distresses, and at last the cry rises, more or less bitterly, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

IV. I CAN, THROUGH HIM WHO STRENGTHENETH ME. This is the right issue of human experience. The great life-lesson. The teaching of God's Spirit. The meetness for the heavenly service. Untried trust is only profession. Experience brings us to "staying upon the Holy One."—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*The power of the anointing.* This verse is an exceedingly difficult one, because containing a poetical figure which modern associations do not readily explain. Literally, it seems to read, "The yoke shall be destroyed from before the oil," or "the fat." For various explanations see the Expository portion of the Commentary. What is clear is, that the yoke referred to is the bondage of Assyria laid on the house of David. This yoke shall be presently removed. The deep reason for the removal is that on the house of David lies the oil, the anointing oil which consecrated it to Jehovah. Jehovah will surely deliver those who are in covenant relations with him

(comp. ch. xxxvii. 35). The reference may be (1) for Hezekiah's sake; (2) for David's sake; (3) for his people's sake; (4) for Messiah's sake. The passage which best explains the figure of the text is 1 John ii. 27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Taking the above as the view of the passage, the subject set before us is this: A man's consecration to God is a constant consideration shaping the Divine dealings. Israel was an anointed race, the house of David was an anointed family, therefore for them no calamity could be overwhelming; all must be subject to gracious Divine *mitigations*, and all must be made *remedial* in their influence.

I. TO THE "ANOINTED" BURDENS AND YOKES MUST COME. 1. Because they are not perfect. 2. Because they are being perfected. 3. Because such burdens and yokes are precise and efficient moral agencies in the work of perfecting. (For the Christian setting of this truth, see Heb. xii. 4—11.)

II. ON THE "ANOINTED" BURDENS AND YOKES CANNOT STAY. Because, having a definite object, they have also a limited time. They would become unmitigated and useless evils if they remained after their moral purpose had been wrought. This may be applied to all the calamities and afflictions of life. The degree, the time, the form, are all in strict Divine control. In fact, all affliction is "but for a moment."

III. FOR THE "ANOINTED" THERE IS HELP IN BEARING BURDENS AND YOKES WHILE THEY MUST STAY. God is with all loyal Hebrew youths when they are in the fires. "When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee." When thorns pierce, "my grace is sufficient for thee." "Therefore we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what man can do unto me."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XI.

Vers. 1—9.—A RENEWED PROPHECY OF MESSIAH AND OF HIS KINGDOM. This chapter is closely connected with the preceding. With the final destruction of Assyria, which, being cut down, sends out no shoot (ch. x. 33, 34), is contrasted the recuperative energy of Israel, which, though equally levelled with the ground (ch. ix. 18, 19), shall spring afresh into life, and "renew its youth." The recovery is connected—or rather identified—with the coming of Messiah, whose character is beautifully portrayed (vers. 2—5). An elaborate description of Messiah's kingdom follows (vers. 6—10)—an expansion of the briefer one in ch. ii. 3, 4.

Ver. 1.—**There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse.** The blasted and ruined "stem" or stock of Jesse, cut down, and for ages hidden from sight, shall suddenly put forth a sprout—a young green sapling, tender yet vigorous, weak seemingly, yet full of life (comp. Job xiv. 7—9, "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant"). "The stem of Jesse" must mean the house of David, for there is but one Jesse (*Ishai*) in Scripture—David's father. **A Branch shall grow out of his roots.** That which is at first a sapling gains strength and grows into a "branch" (see ch. iv. 2, where the word used, though different, is synonymous).

Ver. 2.—**The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him** (comp. Matt. iii. 16; Luke ii. 40; iv. 1, 14, 18; John iii. 34, etc.). The human nature of our Lord required, and received abundantly, the sanctifying and enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. These influences were not in him transient or occasional, as in too many men, who more or less "resist the Spirit," but permanent and enduring. They "rested upon" him; from first to last never quitted, and never will quit, him. **The spirit of wisdom and understanding.** The influences of the Holy Spirit are manifold, affecting the entire complex nature of man (see 1 Cor. xii. 8—11). Here, three pairs of graces are set forth as specially manifested in the Messiah through the power of the Spirit: (1) "Wisdom and understanding," or intellectual and moral apprehension (*εὐσυνεσία*), the ability to perceive moral and abstract truth; (2) "counsel and might," or the power at once to scheme and originate, and

also to carry out thought into act; (3) "The knowledge and the fear of the Lord," or acquaintance with the true will of God, combined with the determination to carry out that will to the full (John iv. 34; Luke xxii. 42; Heb. x. 7). It is needless to say that all these qualities existed in the greatest perfection in our blessed Lord.

Ver. 3.—**And shall make him of quick understanding.** This rendering of the original, though defended by Dr. Kay, is quite without support from any other passage where the same word is used. Modern writers almost all translate, either "the breath of his nostrils shall be in the fear of the Lord" (Herder, Ewald, Meier, Cheyne), or "a sweet savour shall he find in the fear of the Lord" (Gesenius, Delitzsch, Rosenmüller, Knobel). **He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes.** "God seeth the heart." Our Lord "knew men's thoughts" (Matt. ix. 4, etc.), and therefore did not need to "judge according to the appearance" (John vii. 24). Thus his judgments were always righteous.

Ver. 4.—**With righteousness shall he judge the poor** (comp. ch. xxxii. 1, "A king shall reign in righteousness"). It would be characteristic of the Messiah's rule that the poor should be cared for, that oppression should cease, and judgment be no more perverted in favour of the rich. There is an intended contrast between the Messiah's rule in this respect, and that of the princes of Judah (ch. i. 23; iii. 15; x. 1, 2). Christian countries still, for the most part, follow their Lord's example in this particular, if in no other, having judges that are incorruptible, and tribunals that are free from any leaning against the poor. **Reprove**; or, *plead* (as in Job xvi. 21). **The meek of the earth**; rather, *the humble*, or *afflicted*. Low condition, not meekness of spirit, is what the word used expresses. **He shall smite the earth.** A slight alteration of the text produces the meaning, *he shall smite the terrible one* (comp. ch. xxix. 20), which improves the parallelism of the clauses. But there is no need of any alteration, parallelism in Isaiah being often incomplete. The Messiah at his coming will "smite *the earth*" generally (see Mal. iv. 6, and comp. Matt. x. 34, "I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword"), and will also especially chastise "the wicked." **The rod of his mouth . . . the breath of his lips.** "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). The sayings of Christ pierce the conscience and penetrate the soul as no other words that ever came from a human mouth. In the last day words from his mouth will consign to everlasting life or to everlasting destruction.

Ver. 5.—**Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,** etc.; *i.e.* "righteousness shall be ever with him, ever ready for active use, ever (as it were) bracing him for action." Assuredly, he was "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. cxlv. 17). **Faithfulness** (comp. Eph. vi. 14, "Having your loins girt about with truth").

Vers. 6—9.—Messiah's kingdom, when fully realized, shall be one of perfect peace. "They shall neither hurt nor destroy in *all* his holy mountain." Primarily, no doubt, the passage is figurative, and points to harmony among men, who, in Messiah's kingdom, shall no longer prey one upon another (see especially ver. 9). But, from the highest spiritual standpoint, the figure itself becomes a reality, and it is seen that, if in the "new heavens and new earth" there is an animal creation, it will be fitting that there harmony should equally prevail among the inferior creation. Human sin may not have introduced rapine and violence among the beasts—at least, geologists tell us that animals preyed one upon another long before the earth was the habitation of man—but still man's influence may prevail to eradicate the beasts' natural impulses and educate them to something higher. Already domestication produces an accord and harmony that is in a certain sense against nature. May not this be carried further in the course of ages, and Isaiah's picture have a literal fulfilment? Jerome's scorn of the notion as a poetic dream has about it something harsh and untender. Will not God realize all, and more than all, of love and happiness that poets' dreams can reach to?

Ver. 6.—**The wolf . . . the leopard . . . the young lion . . . the bear** are the only ferocious animals of Palestine, where the tiger, the crocodile, the alligator, and the jaguar are unknown. That the Palestinian bear was carnivorous, and a danger to man, appears by Lam. iii. 10; Dan. vii. 5; Amos v. 19. **A little child shall lead them.** Man's superiority over the brute creation shall continue, and even be augmented. The most powerful beasts shall submit to the control of a child.

Ver. 7.—**The lion shall eat straw** (comp. ch. lxv. 25). There is nothing impossible in this. Cats are fond of some kinds of vegetable food.

Ver. 8.—**The sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp**; rather, *by the hole*—near it. The "asp" is probably the *Coluber Naje* of Egypt, whose bite is very deadly. **The cockatrice' den.** The "cockatrice" is

another deadly serpent, perhaps the *Daboia xanthina* (Tristram, 'Natural Hist. of the Bible').

Ver. 9.—**My holy mountain.** As the Jewish Church is always bound up with the "holy hill of Zion," so the Messianic one receives the designation of "the mountain of the Lord" (ch. ii. 3; xxx. 29; Micah iv. 2), or "the holy mountain" (Zech. viii. 3). What was physically true of the type is transferred to the antitype, which is "a city set upon a hill" in a certain sense. **The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord** (comp. Hab. ii. 14; Joel ii. 28; Matt. xxviii. 29). A fruitful knowledge, guiding and influencing conduct, seems to be intended (see below, ch. liv. 13, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children"). **As the waters cover the sea;** *i.e.* "as the ocean covers and fills the bed prepared for it."

Vers. 10—13.—THE JEWS AND GENTILES SHALL BE GATHERED TOGETHER INTO MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. It is characteristic of "the evangelical prophet" that he dwells earnestly and frequently on the calling of the Gentiles (see ch. ii. 2; xix. 22—25; xxv. 6; xxvii. 13, etc.). The prophecies to Abraham had repeatedly declared that "in him," or "in his seed," "all the families of the earth should be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18; xxvi. 4); and some of the psalmists had echoed the glad sound and spoken of God as worshipped generally by "the nations" (Ps. cxvii. 1; cxlviii. 11). But the idea had taken little hold upon the chosen people generally; and was practically new to them when Isaiah was inspired to preach it afresh. To render it the more palatable, he unites with it the promise of a great gathering of the dispersed Israelites from all quarters to the banner of Messiah, when it is set up.

Ver. 10.—**There shall be a root of Jesse.** The "root" of this place is the same as the "rod" and "branch" of ver. 1. The "rod" springs up out of a "root," and is inseparably connected with it. **Which shall stand for an ensign of the people;** rather, *of the peoples.* The "rod" shall lift itself up, and become an ensign, seen from afar, and attracting to itself the attention of "the peoples" or "nations" generally. The Acts and Epistles show how speedily this prophecy was fulfilled. Greeks, Romans, Galatians, Cappadocians, Babylonians (1 Pet. v. 13), saw the ensign, and sought to it. **His rest shall be glorious;** rather, *his resting-place;* i.e. his Church, with which he abides for ever (Matt. xxviii. 20). The Shechinah of his presence makes the Church "glorious" (litorally, "a glory") throughout all ages; but the glory will not fully appear till the time of the "new heavens and new earth" (ch. lxv. 17; Rev. xxi., xxii.), when he will dwell visibly with it.

Ver. 11.—**The Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover,** etc. The first recovery was from the servitude in Egypt. Isaiah now foresees that there will be a dispersion of the Israelites through several distant lands, instead of a mere transference of them from one land to another, as in Jacob's time (Gen. xlvi. 1—29). God, who brought them out of Egypt, will likewise some day "set his hand" to recover them from the various countries through which they will have been dispersed, and restore them to their own land once more. The first fulfilment of the prophecy was undoubtedly the return from the Babylonian captivity. A secondary fulfilment may have been the gathering of so many Jews from all quarters into the Christian Church (Acts ii. 9—41). It is possible that there may be ultimately a further fulfilment in a final gathering together of Israel into their own land. **From Assyria.** Assyria is placed first because already the bulk of the Israelites, as distinct from the Jews, had been carried into Assyria by Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xv. 29) and Sargon (2 Kings xvii. 6; xviii. 11), and were captives there at the time when Isaiah wrote. The transportation of Israelites to the other places mentioned was subsequent to his day. **Egypt . . . Pathros.** There was a great migration of Jews into Egypt in the time of Jeremiah (xliii. 7; xliv. 1), and a steady influx for some generations under the early Ptolemies. There was also a second large migration in the time of Onias. The Jewish element in Alexandria for some centuries both before and after Christ was very considerable. Pathros was probably a portion of Upper Egypt, perhaps the Phaturite nome, which was the district about Thebes. It is mentioned as the residence of certain Jews in the time of Jeremiah (xliv. 1, 15). **From Cush,** "Cush" here may be either the African or the Asiatic. It is slightly in favour of the African that we hear in the Acts of an Ethiopian eunuch who was a Jew in the service of Candace, Queen of the African Ethiopia (Acts viii. 27). And it is against the Asiatic that it was so remote. It adjoined, however, upon Elam. **From Elam, and from Shinar.** "Elam" was the fertile tract of alluvial land to the east of the Tigris, between that stream and the mountains, parallel with Babylonia. Its capital

was Susa, and in Isaiah's time it was an important country, frequently at war with Assyria. Shinar was an ancient name of Babylonia (Gen. x. 10; xi.1—9). The word is used also by Daniel (i. 2) and Zechariah (v. 11). Some regard it as meaning "the land of the *two rivers*." **From Hamath.** (On this town, see note to ch. x. 9.) **From the islands of the sea**; *i.e.* the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. During the Maccabee period, there was a gradual spread of Jews over the Western world. Alliances were made with Rome and Sparta (1 Macc. viii. 1; xii. 2—21; xiv. 20—23, etc.), and Jews became familiar with both Greece and Italy. St. Paul finds numerous Jews at Rome, and in almost every city of Greece.

Ver. 12.—**He shall set up an ensign for the nations** (comp. ver. 10). Christ is the Ensign. God sets it up to draw the nations to his standard. **The outcasts of Israel . . . the dispersed of Judah.** "Outcasts" is masculine, "the dispersed" feminine. The meaning is, "He shall gather together the outcasts and dispersed of both Israel and Judah, both male and female."

Ver. 13.—**The envy also of Ephraim shall depart.** In the kingdom of the Prince of Peace there shall no longer be quarrels or jealousies among the members. Old feuds shall be put aside; the northern and southern tribes shall agree together, and there shall be peace and harmony throughout the entire Church. **Adversaries of Judah.** If any such remain among the Ephraimites, Divine vengeance shall "cut them off," that there be no open disturbance of the harmony.

Vers. 14—16.—THE UNITED CHURCH SHALL TRIUMPH OVER ITS ENEMIES. PHYSICAL OBSTACLES TO ITS UNION GOD WILL REMOVE. Israel's most persistent enemies had been the border-nations of the Philistines, the Edomites, the Arabs, Moab and Ammon. These are now taken as types of the enemies of the Church, and victory over them is promised (ver. 14). A further promise is made that physical difficulties shall not prevent the return of the Jewish exiles from distant countries (vers. 15, 16).

Ver. 14.—**They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines.** It is not to be supposed that actual war is intended. The subjects of the Prince of Peace will not draw the sword. But the Church will for many centuries be confronted by enemies, and must contend with them with legitimate weapons. It is this warfare of which Isaiah now speaks. The united Church will be strong enough to assail her enemies on all sides, and will "swoop" upon the border-country of the Philistines like a bird of prey. **They shall spoil them of the east**; or, *the Beni Kedem*. The phrase is commonly used in an ethnic sense of the nomadic Arabs inhabiting the deserts east of Jordan, beyond the Ammonite and Moabite country, from whose raids Palestine frequently suffered (see Jer. xlix. 28, 29; Ezek. xxv. 4, 10).

Ver. 15.—**The Lord shall utterly destroy**; rather, *shall lay under a curse* (Aquila, *ἀναθεματίσει*). **The tongue of the Egyptian sea.** Either the Gulf of Suez or that of Akabah. God shall do away with those obstacles which keep the nations apart and prevent ready intercourse. Both gulfs are thought to have extended anciently considerably further inland than they do at present. **With his mighty wind**; rather, *with the might of his breath* (*in fortitudine spiritus sui*, Vulgate). **Shall he shake his hand.** A gesture of menace (comp. ch. x. 32). **Over the river.** "The river" (*han-nahar*) is, as usually, the Euphrates, the great river of Western Asia. **And smite it in the seven streams**; rather, *and smite it into seven streams*; i.e. divide its waters among seven channels, so that it may be readily forded, and cease to be a barrier. **Dry-shod**; literally, *in their shoes*; i.e. without taking them off.

Ver. 16.—**There shall be an highway.** This is the object in view—the free and unhindered passage of his people from the various regions where they are scattered (ver. 11) to their resting-place in Palestine.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The spiritual nature of Messiah's perfections.* It was certainly not from Isaiah that the Jews derived their notion that the Messiah would be a mighty temporal prince, the leader of armies, who would break the yoke of Rome from off their shoulders, and give them dominion over all the nations of the earth. Isaiah does, indeed, announce him as a King (ch. xxxii. 1), and could do no less, since he was indeed "King of kings, and Lord of lords." But he ever puts forward his spiritual character, his influence over men as a Teacher, his moral and mental excellences. Messiah's qualifications for his high office (as here enumerated) are—

I. HIS POSSESSION OF WISDOM. "Wisdom" here may be that transcendental quality

whereby God "established the heavens" (Prov. iii. 19; viii. 27); or possibly that still more recondite faculty which Jehovah "possessed in the beginning of his way, before his works of old" (Prov. viii. 22). Being distinguished from "understanding," "counsel," and "knowledge of God," it must apparently be supra-mundane and abstract —a power of which it is difficult for man to form a conception. Its sphere cannot be human life or mundane affairs, but the purely intellectual world of supra-sensuous ideas and concepts.

II. HIS POSSESSION OF UNDERSTANDING. By "understanding" seems to be meant moral intelligence—the power of appreciating the moral character, and judging aright the moral conduct of others. Our Lord possessed this quality in the most eminent degree, never misjudging the character or conduct of any one. His unerring insight gave him an absolute fitness to be the final Judge of men, but was far beyond what is needed by any earthly ruler or king.

III. HIS POSSESSION OF THE SPIRIT OF COUNSEL. Here, no doubt, is a quality of which a temporal ruler has need; but it was not as a temporal ruler, or for the most part in temporal matters, that our Lord's counsel was given. The maxims of his lips were not maxims of worldly policy, but such as these: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;" "Take no thought for the morrow;" "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor," and the like. He counselled men for their spiritual rather than for their worldly good, with a view to a spiritual and not a temporal kingdom.

IV. HIS POSSESSION OF MIGHT. "Might," or ability to execute his designs, is, again, a quality of high value to an earthly ruler; and had our Lord used his might for earthly ends, he might easily have been all, and more than all, that the Jews expected. But he ever restrained himself from any exhibition of physical strength, or power of organization, or even of persuasive eloquence, exhibiting his might only for spiritual ends, in miracles of mercy, whereby he sought to win men's souls to himself, or once and again in miracles of power, shown forth as evidences of his mission.

V. HIS POSSESSION OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. None could know God's will so well as he, who "was in the beginning with God, and was God" (John i. 1). Partaker from everlasting of his Father's counsels, the instrument whereby the Father worked in bringing all things into being (Heb. i. 2), he had sounded all the depths of that nature which he had in common with the Father, and knew even as he was known. This was spiritual knowledge of the highest kind, and enabled him to be man's perfect spiritual Guide, capable of setting before him the true and "perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2) as none other ever was, or will be, capable.

VI. HIS POSSESSION OF THE FEAR OF GOD. "Fear" in the Son is doubtless so mingled with love as to be something very different even from the fear which the angels feel, when they veil their faces before the throne. But the words "Father" and "Son" imply authority and submission, awfulness and reverence. And the human nature of Christ had the same experience of the "fear of God" as belongs to his perfected saints, whether in earth or heaven (Ps. xix. 9; xxxiv. 9; Eccles. xii. 13, etc.). "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name?" Messiah's "fear" brought forth that perfect obedience which made him "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26), and constituted him at once our perfect Pattern and our meritorious Sacrifice.

Vers. 10, 12.—*God's mercy in bringing the Gentiles into his kingdom.* In the old world, when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," God sent forth a fierce destruction, and swept away the entire human race, excepting eight persons. After the Flood he promised, of his own free grace, that he would never *so* destroy mankind again (Gen. ix. 11—15). But it was open to him to have sent upon the world some other equally severe visitation, and to have once more rid the earth of "a seed of evil-doers." The general corruption of the Gentile world, when Christ came, was excessive. It is scarcely possible that the corruption of the antediluvians can have been greater. As a modern historian sums up his account of heathendom at the coming of Christ, "Corruption had attained its full tide at the commencement of the second century. Vices gnawed at the marrow of nations, and, above all, of the Romans: their national existence was more than menaced; the moral sickness had become a physical one in its effects—a subtle poison penetrating into the vitals of the state; and, as before in the

sanguinary civil wars, so now the lords of the world seemed minded to destroy themselves by their vices. Men were denuded of all that was really good, and, surrounded on all sides by the thick clouds of a blinded conscience, they caught with wild eagerness at the grossest sensual enjoyments, in the wild tumult of which they plunged to intoxication" (Döllinger, 'Jew and Gentile,' vol. ii. pp. 284, 285, Eng. Trans.). Or take St. Paul's account of the condition of the heathen when he began his preaching: "As men did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, deceit, debate, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. i. 28—32). Yet, instead of destroying this polluted race, God had compassion on them, and went out of his way to seek them.

I. HE LIFTED UP CHRIST TO THEM AS AN ENSIGN FROM AFAR. By the manifestation of Christ's character in the Gospels, he set them up a Pattern which they could not but admire, which drew them irresistibly by its purity and loveliness, made them hate themselves, and brought them low on their knees before his footstool.

II. HE OFFERED HIS GOSPEL FREELY TO THEM FROM THE FIRST. "Go, disciple ye *all nations*, baptizing them;" "Preach the gospel to *every creature*;" "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." There was no limit, no favouritism; no offer of salvation only to those who had acted up to their previous light.

III. HE RAISED UP A SPECIAL TEACHER, SPECIALLY QUALIFIED, TO BE "THE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES." What impression Christianity would have made on the Gentile world without St. Paul, or some one similarly qualified, it is difficult to say. Conceivably, it might have taken merely the dimensions of a Jewish sect, which believed that the Messiah had come. St. Paul, raised up for the purpose, lifted it above the sphere of Jewish controversy into world-wide consideration. Teaching personally at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Athens, at Corinth, at Rome, disputing with philosophers, converting members of Cæsar's household, he gave it a position among the religions of the world which could not be ignored by later educated inquirers. The apostle of the Gentiles spread Christianity from Syria to Rome, perhaps to Spain, and gave it that hold upon the attention of the educated classes which secured, under God's blessing, its ultimate triumph.

Ver. 14.—*The Church's triumph over its enemies.* The Church of God will always have its enemies, both internal and external, and its external enemies will from time to time gather their hosts, and unite themselves together, and threaten it with destruction. Great was Israel's peril, and great her fear, when her enemies "consulted together with one consent, and were confederate against her: the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Asshur also joining them, and helping the children of Lot" (Ps. lxxxiii. 5—8). Yet the danger passed, the confederacy failed, the various nations were "confounded and troubled; they were put to shame and perished" (Ps. lxxxiii. 17). So it is with the Church. Our Lord has promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18); and consequently its enemies labour in vain to effect its destruction. The Church may have confidence—

I. SINCE CHRIST IS HER HEAD. She is "his Church," "built by him," "upon a Rock," *i.e.* himself; purchased by him with his own blood; loved and cherished and purified by him, that she may be presented to him "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"—his city, his body, his bride.

II. SINCE SHE HAS A SURE WORD OF PROMISE. 1. In the statement, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). 2. In the passage concerning the gates of hell. 3. In the clear declarations of the apocalyptic vision, which show her ultimate triumph.

III. SINCE SHE HAS PASSED THROUGH PERILS AS GREAT AS ANY THAT CAN HEREAFTER ASSAIL HER. 1. The peril of the imperial persecutions (Nero, Diocletian, Galerius, Julian). 2. The peril of the barbarian invasions (Goths, Huns, Vandals, etc.). 3. The

peril of Mohammedanism. 4. The peril of the dark ages. 5. The peril involved in *unlimited* private judgment. 6. The peril of the French Revolution. Half a score of times has she seemed on the point of succumbing; but each time that she is struck to the ground, she rises, like Antæus, refreshed and reinvigorated.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The coming of the Messiah.* I. HIS ORIGIN. "From Ishai's worn stem a shoot will sprout forth, and a green branch burst forth from his roots." From the stock of David, now fallen very low, the coming Deliverer will arise in all the vigour of youth. Seldom does the great man come but of some pure and generous strain of blood. Like some stream which, long hidden underground, reappears again in the daylight, or some vein of precious ore, recovered after some extensive "fault," so it was believed the royal race and the spiritual prowess of David might be obscured for ages, but must be illustrated before the world again. As God saves and blesses the world by means of great men, so in a measure is this true of houses, families, tribes, and nations. There is a principle of providential selection running through life. Though men be of one blood in all their tribes, it is not to be denied that there are different qualities in that blood. Hence *noblesse oblige*, and great endowments make great expectations and imply great responsibilities. The thought of the seeming extinction, yet destined revival of David's house, may remind us of the imperishableness of the germs of good. David's house was never restored to the throne in the visible sense. Yet the memory of David persisted, begot hope, inspired patience, and was gradually converted into one of the mightiest of spiritual forces in the conscience of the nation. An idea may pass through many changes of form, but it dies not so long as the faith and passion of the heart in which it sprung are living.

II. HIS SPIRIT. In the religious mode of thought a true temper of the mind is to be traced to Divine inspiration, no less than the great physical or mental ability. What meaning lies in our common expressions, "a gift," "an endowment," "a talent," "an influence"! None of them but is deeply religious, if we trace them to their primary felt significance. Upon this chosen one there "rests the Spirit of Jehovah." And three characters, in the iterative idiom of the Hebrew, are given of this spirit. It is that (1) of wisdom, (2) of courage, (3) of reverence. The qualities of the statesman, the soldier, the man of God. "His breathing is in Jehovah's fear." There can be no simpler nor stronger expression of a man thoroughly "animated," as we say, by religious principle. And (4) he has the attributes of the just judge. Prompt to redress the injuries of the oppressed and suffering, his rule of conduct is not the pleasure of his eyes and ears, but the eternal equity of him who is no respecter of persons. As the consequence of thus vitally living in communion with God as in the common and necessary air he breathes, he possesses irresistible strength. His mere word of judgment smites the earth more powerfully than the despot's sceptre, while his mere breath destroys the wicked like a pestilence. In a word, it is a sublime picture of moral majesty. This King needs not the weapons of ordinary warfare. He has a better defence of his throne than swords and spears, a better battle-array than the suit of armour. Justice and faithfulness themselves are his best, his only preparations.

III. THE BLESSINGS OF HIS RULE. There will be a marvellous growth of peace and prosperity. The progress of true culture is marked by the subduing of savagery. The wild animals change their nature and become harmless to mankind. Wickedness is ferocious; men's untamed passions are like the wolf, the bear, and the deadly serpent. There will be no sin nor sinners in Zion, because the knowledge of the true God will be all-diffused and all-inexhaustible as the ocean. To what state of life do these predictions refer? To the advent of Christ and his kingdom? Certainly; and yet when Christ came, not only did not universal peace set in, but the light of Zion and the glories of the sacred city were quenched in blood. And Christ himself opened up a gloomy perspective of the future in his closing prophecies. Where, then, and when this scene of bliss? Let us content ourselves with believing that the prophecy refers to some state to us unknown. Earth will be earth, and not heaven. This heaven is in the soul first; there we dream of it, nay, we realize it as we listen to the prophet's

glowing words, and believe that but a step may carry us into a world where it is realized by all. The prophecy is already fulfilled for us if God has made a heaven of hope in our hearts.—J.

Vers. 10—16.—*Judah and the nations.* I. HONOUR TO THE ROOT OF JUDAH. The scion from the ancient trunk will be honoured far and wide among the heathen, because of those virtues already described in the preceding section. It will be a banner to which they will flock, a centre of light and living oracles.

II. REDEMPTION OF THE REMNANT. The mighty hand of Jehovah will be stretched forth to gather the scattered ones from all the four quarters of their dispersion. When the banner is raised, the heathen will own its power and the captives will be released.

III. INTERNAL UNITY. The two great tribes will remain side by side, but then enmity will cease. The recent destruction of Samaria had been caused by that enmity; which ceasing, it will be found that union is strength, and the nations will submit on the West and East. And those great threatening neighbours, Egypt and Assyria, will feel the weight of Jehovah's hand and the punishment which the word of his mouth inflicts. And as the great river is smitten into seven fordable streams, the company of pilgrims will flow back, a way made for them by the hand of their God, as in the days of their forefathers, and the exodus from Egypt. The scion from the old stump may be taken as a figure of the revival of true religion in times of decay. And such revival means the union of long-sundered hearts, the recognition of an internal unity among all the faithful, the restoration of influence, and the dismay of the ungodly world.—J.

Ver. 10.—*The rest of Christ.* "And his rest shall be glorious." This chapter commences with the full Messianic strain. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse;" and the music swells, in the Hebrew rhythm of thought, into a sublime prophecy of the reign of Christ. This "root of Jesse" is to be "an ensign of the people," and "to it shall the Gentiles seek." We are thus led to understand the words, "his rest," as applying to the triumph of the Saviour.

I. MANY IDEAS OR FORMS OF REST ARE INGLORIOUS. They are connected with mere military conquest. There is the peace of subjection, or there is the peace of compromise, or there is the peace which belongs to the desert and the wilderness, when they are simply let alone. But Christ's peace is his own beautiful peace of nature. "My peace I give unto you." His rest is not artificial. It is the rest of holy expectation. He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

II. THIS GLORY IS PROSPECTIVE AS WELL AS PRESENT. It "shall be glorious." The golden age of the gospel is in the future. "From henceforth expecting;" "He must reign." It will be a glorious rest. For truth will conquer error. Right will conquer might. Love will have victory over all forms of division and hate. It shall be; for Christ hath spoken it. It shall be; for he has all power in heaven and earth. It shall be on spiritual grounds; for the mightiest moral force ever and always triumphs in the end.

III. THIS REST OF CHRIST IS OUR REST TOO. We have not only received forgiveness through the cross, but newness of life as well. We have rest now, not in its fulness, but in its ideal; for we have the mind of Christ. We have within us the kingdom and patience of Christ; we are one with the Father through Christ. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*Characteristics of Jesus Christ.* The expression of the prophet, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," has a very close correspondence with the New Testament references to Jesus Christ (Matt. iii. 16; Luke iv. 1, 14, 18; John iii. 34). This full possession by our Lord of the Spirit of God revealed itself, and is still found, in these particulars which the prophecy indicates.

I. HIS PERFECT PIETY. In him dwelt the "fear of the Lord" without measure (ver. 2), and he "delighted in the fear of Jehovah;" "the fear of Jehovah was fragrance to him" (emended readings for, "and shall make him of quick understanding," etc., ver. 3). He could say, "I delight to do thy will . . . yea, thy Law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 8). To reverence, to please, to obey God, to consult his will and be subject to it, was the law of his life and the refreshment of his spirit.

II. HIS INTUITIVE PERCEPTION OF THE BEST AND HIGHEST. In "him was the spirit of wisdom and understanding." He distinguished at once the false from the true, the glittering show from the genuine good, the passing pleasure from the abiding joy, the fictitious gain from the invaluable heritage, the vanity of earthly honours from the blessedness of the Divine favour. Christ saw all things on which he looked in their actual and essential nature, and in their true proportions. Hence—

III. HIS EXCELLENCY AS OUR GUIDE. In him was "the spirit of counsel" (see Homily on 'Chief counsels of Christ,' ch. ix. 6).

IV. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE AND OF THE FUTURE. Fallen, degenerate man, with conscience defiled and reason depraved, could know nothing certainly of these two supreme subjects: he wanted, urgently and imperatively, one who had "the spirit of knowledge" in him, and could tell him distinctly and finally, not what he guessed or what he hoped, but what *he knew*. This Jesus did. He revealed the Divine Father unto men (Matt. xi. 27; John i. 18; x. 15). And he made known to us the truth as to the future; he brought life and immortality *out into the light* (John v. 28, 29; xi. 25, 26; 2 Tim. i. 10).

V. HIS PROFOUND KNOWLEDGE OF THE HUMAN HEART. He judged men, "not by the outward appearance," not "by the sight of his eyes or the hearing of his ears," but by looking down through the coverlet of the flesh, through the armoury of speech, into the secret chambers of the soul. He not only saw through the fig tree, but through the flesh, and knew Nathanael's simplicity of spirit. "He knew what was in man," and knows now, discerning the hollowness of some men's pretensions, appreciating the excellency beneath some men's doubts and diffidences.

VI. HIS ABSOLUTE IMPARTIALITY. (Ver. 4.) He had one measure for the rich and the poor, for the mighty and the meek; he showed unvarying kindness towards the humblest, and he showed a constant readiness to receive those who were enriched with worldly wealth, or endowed with social honour. The testimony of his enemies was true enough; he "regarded not the person of men" (Mark xii. 14). Such is the genius of his gospel—"the common salvation" (see 1 Cor. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28; v. 6; Eph. vi. 8).

VII. HIS RIGOROUS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Vers. 4, 5.) Christ, in his righteousness, demanded the spiritual service of all men, and he condemned all that withheld it. He showed himself the determined enemy of evil. 1. He denounced it in scathing terms when he was with us (see Matt. xxiii.). 2. He announces himself as the Judge of all, who will punish the impenitent according to their deeds (see Matt. xxv.).

VIII. HIS FAITHFULNESS. (Ver. 5.) "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end." He "never leaves nor forsakes" those who serve him. Throughout our fidelity to him his love to us is constant; in the time of our slackness or departure he visits us in his faithfulness with his kind correction, in order to attach us to himself, or to call us back to his side; in the hour of our suffering he makes good his presence of Divine support; when everything earthly fails us, the faithful Promiser will fulfil his word, and receive us to himself, that we may dwell in his glory.—C.

Vers. 6—9.—*The intensive and extensive power of the gospel.* I. THE INTENSIVE POWER OF DIVINE TRUTH. More power is needful (1) to act on any living thing than on lifeless, inert matter; (2) to act on a sentient creature than on life without sensation; (3) to act on intelligence and will (on man) than on the irrational and irresponsible animal; (4) on man sunk into the lowest moral condition (with seared conscience, mastering passions and habits fixed in vice) than on one who has not yet chosen his course, or who has been trained in the ways of virtue. The very highest instance of power with which we are familiar is that spiritual influence which transforms those who have gone furthest away from God, from truth, and from righteousness—those who are to the moral world what the tiger, the lion, or the asp is to the animal world. The gospel of Jesus Christ has this power. With such wonderful intensity does it work on those on whom its truth is brought to bear, that it redeems and renews the worst, so changing them in life and in spirit that it may be said of them that the wolf dwells with the lamb, etc.; so transformed do they become, under its benignant influence, that the most innocent and helpless have nothing to fear, though they be placed completely within their power (ver. 8). 1. Individual instances

abound of the conversion of notorious drunkards, of savage prize-fighters, of shameless courtesans, of ribald atheists, of those who were abandoned by all, and who abandoned themselves to hopeless sin, of men who were the terror of their tribe or of their district, etc. Therefore we need not and we should not despair of those who are living amongst us, and who are at present a long way off from truth and righteousness. The gospel of Christ can change the very nature of these—can tame the most ferocious, can raise the most fallen, can liberate the most enslaved, can make beautiful the most deformed of the children of men; it can do so by the power of the truth and of the Spirit of God. 2. Families, societies, communities have undergone as complete a transformation.

II. THE EXTENSIVE RANGE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. (Ver. 9.) What a vast void would there be if the waters were withdrawn! Into what profound depths should we look down! What mighty stretches of sand and clay and rock would be disclosed! What lengths and breadths are covered, what depths are now filled up by the abounding waters of the sea! As containing the element of life to millions of living creatures, as supplying a highway for the nations of the earth, and as providing scope for the ambition, courage, and enterprise of man, what a grand sufficiency do we see in the waters of the ocean! So shall it prove to be with Divine truth. There shall be seen to be a sufficiency, in the gospel of the Saviour, to cover the entire earth, to meet the wants of the whole population of the globe. No land so remote, no clime so rigorously cold or scorchingly hot, no interior so impenetrable, no barbarism so rude, no prejudice so inveterate, but that the gospel of Christ shall cover it with its benignant power. 1. Let us rejoice in the earnest of its fulfilment; great things have been already done towards the realization of this glorious estate. 2. Let us resolve to have our share in its execution (1) as a Church, and (2) as individual souls, to each of whom God has committed some word to be spoken, some work to be done.—C.

Ver. 6.—*The leading of a little child: Sunday school sermon.* "And a little child shall lead them." The reduction of the fierceness of wild animals to such tameness that a little child may lead them is a very beautiful, poetical picture of the transformation of the worst of the wicked to the excellency of the Christian spirit. We may, without impropriety, allow these words to suggest thoughts on the way in which the regeneration and perfecting of human character is *brought about* by the leading of the little child. God is training us all; we are all at his great school. Christ is the great Teacher; the Word of God is our "book of reference." But there are other sources of instruction at his command. Of these is the family life which he has instituted, and where we may all learn most valuable lessons. We may consider how we are led by the little child—leading sometimes from bad to good, and at other times from good to better things. The little child sometimes leads—

I. FROM THE FAR DISTANCE OF FLAGRANT WRONG TOWARDS THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. We have often read of the dissipated, or ungodly, or unbelieving parent, who has separated himself (herself) from all sacred privileges, and, it may be, gone far in forbidden paths, when all other influences have failed, being led by the soft, pleading accents of the little child to the safe precincts of the home, or to the services of the sanctuary, or to the path and practice of sobriety, and so to the kingdom of Christ. Sometimes it is not the living voice, but the remembered pleadings of the departed child coming from the other side the veil, which lead the distant wanderer to "come to himself," and then to "arise and go to the Father."

II. FROM OUTSIDE INTO THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. And this: 1. *As a model.* When the disciples were discussing amongst themselves which of them should be the greatest in the kingdom, Jesus Christ took a child and set him in the midst of them, and said that, except they were wholly changed and became as little children in their spirit, they could not so much as *enter* that kingdom at all. It is the *child-spirit* which introduces us into the kingdom of Christ. They who are kept outside by difficulties which they cannot solve, and they also who are excluded from faith and peace by a sense of unworthiness from which they cannot rise, need but to have the simple, unquestioning spirit of childhood; they need but to realize that they are God's very little children, and should take his word even as they expect their own little ones to take theirs, and they will "come in" and be blessed. 2. *As a motive.* We are moved by many motives.

and our serious decisions are usually determined by more considerations than one. There are many strong and urgent reasons why a man should yield himself to God; but if all these fail to move him, let him remember the little child (children) beneath his roof for whom he is responsible, who will almost certainly imbibe his spirit, and grow up to be such as he is; and for his (their) sake, if not for his own, let him live the life which is right and worthy and wise.

III. ON, IN THE KINGDOM, TOWARD THE GOAL AND THE PRIZE. 1. The little child continually reminds us of those graces which our heavenly Father looks to see in us. As we are pleased with the docility, the trustfulness, the obedience, the affection of our children, and are pained when we witness the reverse, so is he affected by our attitude towards him. 2. The little child leads us into the field of Christian usefulness. The Christian Church saw the little child ignorant, unenlightened, neglected, in danger of growing up to manhood far from truth and God, and it let him put his hand into its arm and lead it into the school where it should receive the knowledge and the influence which it needed. And the child having thus, by its very weakness and simplicity and necessity, led the Church into the school, it is for the Church to lead the child into the ways of heavenly wisdom, into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, into the path of usefulness and holy service.—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The refuge of the remnant.* Allusion is here made again to "the remnant" (see ch. x. 20—22), who are spoken of in the following verse (ver. 12) as "the outcasts" and "the dispersed." The remnant of a thing or of a community is not the choice part, but rather that which is left when everything (every one) else has been chosen—the shapeless scraps which remain when all else has been selected and appropriated; the broken-off ends which are flung aside as of no account; the scattered men who fall out of rank, dispirited or disabled, etc. It signifies that which is of least regard among men. The remnant of Israel was that part of the community that was left when kings had lost their throne, and nobles their nobility, and priests their function, and the country was wasted. However despised and rebuffed of man this remnant might be, it should still have a place in the thought and in the purpose of God. He would remember it, would "recover" it, would "gather it together," would manifest his favour toward it in the eyes of all the nations. We may let God's treatment of the remnant of Israel remind us—

I. THAT HUMAN SOCIETY ALWAYS CONTAINS ITS REMNANTS, those of very small account in its estimate. We can always find, if we look for them, those who seem to be abandoned, to be helpless, to have "no future," to be beyond recovery; those for whom there is nothing but resignation, if not, indeed, despair; those whose cause no man espouses, and who do not expect to be recovered or restored. Of these are: 1. *The hopelessly sick*—those who inherit a constitution or receive injuries which disqualify them for the battle of life, and place them at the mercy of the community of which they are members. 2. *Those who have broken down*—who went up eagerly to the battle and struck some good stroke, but have been sore wounded; who have overtaxed their strength, and who find themselves unnerved and incapable, obliged to resign their duties to other hands, their post to other aspirants. 3. *Those who have mistaken their calling*—who have pursued a line of action beyond their capacity, or for which they were not fitted; who have, consequently, been halting and stumbling all along their course, and have come into ill repute and condemnation. 4. *Those who have been signally unfortunate*—who have embarked all their resources in one scheme which has broken down, or who have entered into some most serious (perhaps the supreme human) relationship which has proved to be a disastrous mistake; whose heart is well-nigh broken, and whose hopes are quite blighted.

II. THAT THESE ARE THE OBJECTS OF PECULIAR DIVINE REGARD. Some of these are near to us; they are the poor whom "we have always with us," living hard by us, worshipping in our sanctuaries, walking in our streets. As we have opportunity, we should assure them that they must not take the negligence or disregard of man as in any way indicating the mind of God. As the human mother lavishes the wealth of her tenderness and love on that one of her children who is the frailest and the most dependent of her family, so does the Divine Parent care most for those of his children who are most in need of his special kindness. Was it not the "little ones," *i.e.* the

weak, the disregarded, the despised, the unbefriended, whom our Lord treated most graciously, and whom he specially commended to our sympathy and succour (see Matt. xii. 20)? Unto such, if they are his disciples, he will multiply his favours, and on them pour out his richest and most abounding grace. There are "remnants," "outcasts," of another kind—those who have gone down in the battle of temptation; who are bowed down with a sense of shame and dishonour, and who are cast off by their fellows as worsted and useless. Is there any hope for them in God? Yes, there is ample room in the promises, because in the heart of the Divine Saviour, for these. In his thought they are not remnants to be flung into the fire; driftwood on the river of fate, for which there is nothing but to be carried down the stream and cast over the cataracts; disinherited sons for whom there is nothing better than to forget the family to which they belong, and make themselves happy with the husks in the far country. No; in the heart and in the hope of Jesus Christ these are gold for his crown; they are ships that, with chart and compass, may yet sail gallantly down the river of life, and out into the shoreless seas of a blessed immortality; they are sons and daughters that will be most warmly welcomed beneath the Father's roof, and seated at the Father's table. In this best sense may the remnant be restored.—C.

Vers. 13—16.—*Conditions of victory.* These verses probably point to the time when all Israel shall be gathered into the fold of the gospel, and when "their fulness" shall contribute largely to the conversion of the Gentile world (see Rom. xi.). But we may take a more practical view of the subject if we regard it thus; we have pictures of—

I. PRESENT SPIRITUAL ANARCHY. The people of God everywhere dispersed, the theocracy broken up, the temple destroyed, the Law unobserved, the heathen triumphant,—all this a vivid picture of the "kingdom of God" in a state of dissolution: truth unrecognized, commandments disobeyed, conscience perverted, the Divine will disregarded, God himself unknown in the world.

II. THE ULTIMATE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM. The restoration of Israel as depicted here, whether it be to their own land and their ancient institutions or whether it be to their true place in the spiritual purpose of God, may speak to us of that grand consummation of human hope, when the kingdom of our God shall be re-established upon earth; when that kingdom, which is not the enforcement of any ecclesiastical *régime*, or the observance of any rules of diet or of devotion, but "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17), shall take the place of "the kingdom of this world," which is iniquity, unrest, and death.

III. THE CONDITIONS OF ITS ATTAINMENT. These are threefold. 1. *The disappearance of fratricidal strife.* (Ver. 3.) What Judah and Ephraim were in old theocratic times, that neighbouring Churches or Christian comrades have been to one another all through these "Christian centuries." Sadly must the Lord of love have looked down on his heritage, the purchase of his sorrow and his death, and have seen the envies and the jealousies, the hatreds and the cruelties, which have marked and marred the intercourse of his disciples. No progress of his blessed kingdom can be expected in any community when they whose relations should be beautified by concord are all disfigured by enmity and strife. Let Christian Churches cease to hope for any results from their preaching or their praying, so long as bitterness blights the heart, and contention characterizes the Church (see Matt. v. 24). There is no effort, there is no sacrifice, which it is not worth while for any Christian society to make in order that it may wrench out "the root of bitterness" which, while it remains, will neutralize all devotion, and make all zeal to be "nothing worth." 2. *Active co-operation among the people of God.* "*They* [Ephraim and Judah together] shall fly . . . they shall spoil . . . *they* shall lay their hand," etc. (ver. 14). Their united forces were to prevail over the bands of the enemy, and to secure victory on every side. So shall it be in the spiritual campaign. It will be when all the Churches of Christ unite, not indeed in any one visible amalgam, but in well-concerted action, joining heartily against the common foe, going out together against ignorance, unbelief, ungodliness, vice, indecision, and all the long train of sin; it will then be found that the enemy will be subdued, and victory be secured. 3. *Divine energy working on the side of truth.* (Vers. 15, 16.) As the Lord interposed on behalf of Israel in one deliverance, and

would do so in another, by his overcoming might making the pathway from Egypt and the highway from Assyria, so will he interpose on behalf of the spiritual forces which are doing his work in the world. He will make that possible and practicable which seems impossible and impracticable; will enable the champions of his cause to go where it seems hopeless for them to penetrate, and to conquer where victory seems utterly out of reach. Therefore (1) let prayer be earnest, (2) let the heart be hopeful, (3) let effort be energetic and persistent.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Christ the Branch.* "But a shoot shall come forth from the stem of Jesse, and a fruitful sprout shall grow up from his roots" (Henderson's translation; see ch. iv. 2). The idea is of a *sucker* springing up from a hewn stump. The word used (*netser*) is singularly suggestive of despised Nazareth, with which place the early life of Messiah was associated, and of which it could jeeringly be said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Wordsworth remarks on the sublime contrast in this prophecy and the foregoing, "The mighty and haughty worldly power of Assyria—the type of impiety and antichristianism—will be hewn down, like a great forest, in the pride of its strength and glory, never to rise again; but the spirit of prophecy here reveals, that when the house of David seemed like a tree hewn down to a stump in the earth, then a sucker would spring up from the stump, and a branch shooting forth from its roots would bear fruit and overshadow the earth. And so it came to pass. At a time when the house of David seemed to be reduced to the lowest estate, when the Virgin was a poor maiden in a village of despised Galilee, then by God's miraculous agency the Branch sprouted up from the hewn-down stump, and grew up into a mighty Tree, and brought forth much fruit, and received the world under its shade." It has been cleverly suggested that "the cedar of Lebanon, the symbol of the Assyrian power, was to be cut down, and, being of the pine genus, which sends forth no suckers, its fall was irretrievable. But the oak, the symbol of Israel, and of the monarchy of the house of David, had a life remaining in it after it had been cut down, and the rod or sucker that was to spring from its roots should flourish once again in greater glory than before." We fix attention on the sentiment entertained respecting suckers, which are usually despised, thought to be weak and frail things, from which nothing of value is ever to be expected.

I. THE SURPRISE OF CHRIST'S LOWLY BEGINNINGS. Born into a poor family, at a time when David's race was at its lowest humiliation; born, as one crowded out by the hurry of life, in the courtyard of an inn; brought up in a despised village. There were but a few gleams of glory resting on his infancy. Angels heralded the tidings of his birth; Magi offered worship to him at the Bethlehem cottage. But Herod would, if he could, have broken off that sucker, almost ere it began to show its greenness. It would take a great power of imagination to picture a splendid career and a world-wide renown for that poor Bethlehem babe. "He came to his own, and his own received him not."

II. THE HOPE OF CHRIST'S EARLY YEARS. We need not accept the strange and foolish legends of Apocryphal Gospels concerning the infancy and childhood of Jesus. We have one all-sufficient historical incident, presenting the boy of twelve years, and convincing us that a wonderful manhood was in its unfolding. His mother observed much, and pondered over many things in her heart, and the story of Christianity has verified every hope which that good mother cherished.

III. THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S GROWTH. The sucker became strong, grew into a branch, began to put forth branches of its own, became a tree whose beauty attracted the attention of all men. Two passages suggest illustration and detail: "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him;" "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Other suggestions come from the statements, "All that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers;" and, "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Intelligence, submissiveness, obedience, were the beautiful features of his child-time—the splendid promise of after-years.

IV. THE AMAZING RICHNESS OF CHRIST'S FRUIT. When the sucker came to bearing-time, it altogether surpassed the old tree of David. Illustrate its fruitage (1) of holy

example; (2) of wise teaching; (3) of gracious healings; (4) of heroic sufferings; (5) of eternal triumph over sin. Moral and spiritual fruitage answering to the needs of thirsting and hungry men. Fruit which was the "Bread of life." The despised tree of David at last sent forth a sucker, which swiftly grew into a tree, whose leaves were for the healing of all the nations, and whose fruit was for the spiritual quickening of a world that was "dead in trespasses and sins."—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Christ's enduements by the Spirit.* The prophetic conception of Messiah is of a man, specially endowed and fitted for his mission by God's Spirit. The figures that help prophetic vision are David, endowed with the spirit of rule and of song; and Solomon, endowed with the spirit of wisdom. And the New Testament bids us think of Christ as having the Spirit, not *by measure*, but without measure—the fulness of God dwelling in him (Col. i. 19; ii. 9). Compare the beginning of our Lord's sermon at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke iv. 18). The point suggested is that God's enduements are always in precise adaptation to a man's work. Here, in relation to Christ, the "qualities are arranged in three pairs, but all spring from one Source, the Spirit of Jehovah, which rests permanently upon him. They are (1) moral and intellectual clearness of perception; (2) the wisdom and bravery which befit a ruler; (3) a knowledge of the requirements of Jehovah, and the will to act agreeably to this knowledge" (Cheyne). Christ was a Teacher, Healer, Example, Saviour, Head of a spiritual kingdom. As fitting him for these positions and offices, he was endued with—

I. WISDOM. The special gifts of the ruler, as called to judge difficult, complex cases. In its highest form implying comprehension of the secret things of God.

II. UNDERSTANDING. Or keen, quick discernment; the sagacity which discovers the right thing to do, and the right word to say, in all human relationships.

III. COUNSEL. The power to form wise plans; the clear purpose which fits a king for the exercise of sovereignty. "He shall know how to administer the affairs of his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great ends of it—the glory of God, and the welfare of the children of men."

IV. MIGHT. The ability to carry plans into execution. With men we often find a divorce between the skill to plan and the power to execute.

V. FEAR OF GOD. The disposition which keeps us ever anxiously watching for, and resolved to do, God's will. The reverence and faith which is the beginning of all wisdom.

Illustrations of each may readily be found in the life of the Lord Jesus; and it may be urged that all these enduements brought him the power that lies in righteousness—the power (1) to wither all evil; (2) to nourish all good.—R. T.

Vers. 3—5.—*The principles of Messianic rule.* These are exemplified in the actual administration of the *head* of the Messianic kingdom. The picture presented here is designed to be in sharp contrast with that of the unjust judges referred to in ch. i. 23; ii. 14, 15; x. 1, 2. The figure of clothing one's self, or being clothed, with moral attributes is not unfrequent in the Scriptures. The girdle is mentioned as an essential part of Oriental dress, and that which keeps the other garments in their proper place and qualifies the wearer for exertion. The rules, or characteristics, of the Messianic or spiritual kingdom may be illustrated under the following headings.

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS AS BEFORE GOD. The absolutely right is to be sought; and it will be found in what (1) God is; (2) what God commands; (3) what God approves. Matthew Henry says, "He shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle; it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt." Compare the kingdom ruled by considerations of *righteousness* with the kingdoms ruled by considerations of *expediency*.

II. EQUITY BETWEEN MAN AND MAN. The determination that every man shall *get* his due, and *bear* his due. Many cases arise in which strict justice must be toned by consideration of circumstances. In view of human infirmity, the *equitable* must sometimes be put instead of the right.

III. EFFICIENT PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED. The strong hand on the wrong-doer is ever an essential of good government.

IV. FAITHFULNESS TO DUTY. Duty being distinguished from right in this, that it is something we are bound to do, upon the authority of some one who has the right to command us. "Faithfulness" is closely kin with "loyalty." And Messiah is a theocratic King, a Vicegerent of Jehovah.

V. PEACE EVERYWHERE. Because, if righteousness prevails, nobody will wrong others, and nobody will have wrongs to avenge. Jealousies, envyings, violence, covetings, all fade before advancing righteousness; and when Jesus, the righteous King, reigns over mind and heart and life, then the glory-day will have come, and "no war or battle-sound" will then be "heard the world around."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The Christian "golden year."* Isaiah's relief, from the burdens, sins, and sorrows of his times, is his anticipation of the coming days of Messiah, which were to ancient Jews their "golden year." Isaiah's visions break in on his records of evil and prophetic denunciations, and lie like pools of blue in a cloudy sky, or stand like an oasis of palm-trees in a dreary desert. The general thought of this chapter is, that when righteousness can really and fully reign, then peace will be attained. As soon as the righteous King can reach the throne of universal dominion, the world shall be at peace from all its miseries, and not from war alone. When the perfect King is universally acknowledged, then there will be established the perfect kingdom.

I. PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES SET FORTH A PERFECT BEING, AN IDEAL KING. Men have always been on the outlook for a glorious future—"a good time coming." But poetic imagery has been vague, and generalization has meant weakness. Bible prophecy sets before us: 1. *A Person*—a Son; and the actual incidents of his life, as a veritable human being, are foretold. 2. *A perfect Person.* Observe the statements of this chapter, and the idea that was formed of Messiah. 3. *A Person with kingly authority.* If he be a perfect man, he must be a king among men. This kingly idea was set forth (1) in the theocracy founded by Moses; (2) in David's reign; (3) in Daniel's vision. In the times of Jewish captivity the promise of such a leader and deliverer was needed to keep men from utter despair. The conception of a perfect person is as utterly beyond us as the conception of a perfect age. Before Christ came neither had been realized. Now one has. The perfect Person has come, and we have a right to say that "with God all things are possible," seeing that the one so-called impossible has been overcome. The historical Christ is the realization of what men thought to be the impossible.

II. PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES SET BEFORE US A PERFECT AGE, AN IDEAL KINGDOM. Observe the figures of the chapter; and such expressions as "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea," and Dan. vii. 13, 14. Poetry has its "golden age," for the most part, in the past. Scripture has it in the future. Towards it we are moving. For it we are working. In olden time men failed in faith that the perfect *King* would come, and now we fail in faith that the perfect *kingdom* will ever come, because we cannot quite explain the when, the how, and the why. It may be said—Have we any seemingly good reasons for our failing faith? And it may be urged that (1) the golden age has never yet been reached in part, anywhere; (2) there are no signs of its nearing approach; and (3) we cannot clearly mark even our own growing meetness for it. The perfect age has scarcely even a faint beginning in us. But who can discern victory through the smoke of battle? And yet the victory may, in effect, be won. With cleared eyesight we might see many hopeful signs; such as these: 1. The King has come, and is conflicting for his rights. 2. The perfect kingdom is sometimes nearly reached by the saintly believers. 3. In limited measure it is realized in the Church of Christ. 4. In its wider form, as a kingdom of righteousness, it is extending over all the earth. And if God could give the world the perfect King, he can also give the perfect age. The practical question is—What are we doing to hurry its on-coming? The world's hope lies in the spreading of the knowledge of the Lord. Everywhere the heralds must go until the earth is full, as full as the sea-basin is with the waters. We must, for ourselves, know the Lord, and we must speak of him, and witness concerning him, to others; for every act of godly living and godly labouring is bringing near the "golden year."—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The centre of attraction for the whole world.* "An ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek." In prophetic form we have here expressed the truth which Messiah himself expressed when he said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." All humanity is figured as turning to look on the crucified One, and responding to an irresistible attraction which makes all gather round him, as armies gather about an ensign or standard, and as clans gather to the appointed meeting-place. Our Lord spoke, on three separate occasions, of the attractive power that would come from his "uplifting." (1) John iii. 14. Here the idea is a general one. Lifted up in the sense of being set in sight of men, as the brazen serpent was when set up on the pole in the middle of the camp. (2) John viii. 28. Here the idea is that his Messiahship would be evident when his life was complete, and that would not be until he was lifted up in death. (3) John xii. 32. Here we find Greek proselytes anxious to see Jesus. Such pressing into the kingdom was premature. The "corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die." Greeks and Gentiles must wait just a little while longer. The ensign would soon be lifted up; then to it they may seek. It is interesting to notice that the Syriac word for "crucify" means "to raise," "to lift up," as men set up a standard. Christ's power from his cross—Christ's attraction as an Ensign—is our subject, and we note—

I. CHRIST, ON HIS CROSS, ATTRACTIVELY REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE MINDS OF MEN. We can only get imperfect and unsatisfactory views by limiting our attention to Christ's *work*. In that way we can only hope to formulate cold and lifeless doctrines. But our views are equally imperfect if we limit our attention to Christ's *person*. Then we can do no more than nourish sentiment, or set before ourselves an example for imitation. We must combine both, and let each illuminate the other. Illustrate the splendour of the combined oxy-hydrogen light. How much Christ made of himself! In a man it would be painful egotism; why is it not in him? Because it was his mission to *manifest* God to men; so he must point to himself. All his life, speech, doing, suffering, was a gradual disclosing of himself, of the deep mystery of his origin, his claim, of God in him. But what we need to see more fully than we do is that, apart from his death, as he died, his life could not have efficiently revealed him. Death only completes the test. If he had failed in that supreme hour, an imperfect sonship could never have shown to us the perfect Father-God. We can see that only the story of his life could not have sufficed, for: 1. His enemies misrepresented that life, and said, "He hath a devil." 2. Disciples misunderstood it, and only saw its meaning after his death. 3. Critics now can explain the life, but are hopelessly puzzled by the mystery of his death. Lifted up, Christ is set before us (1) as the model Man; (2) as not a mere man; (3) as the Son of God with power. And if religion demands personal love to and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we must know him, we must know him fully; and we can only thus know him as he is "lifted up."

II. CHRIST, ON HIS CROSS, ATTRACTIVELY SHOWS HIMSELF TO THE HEARTS OF MEN. Men may be driven or drawn to goodness. The gospel has its majesty of driving, its "whip of small cords." "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." But its great power is its drawing power; its moral influence; its constraint of the affections, and of the will. A voice from the "Ensign," from Jesus lifted up, is ever calling to us and saying, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see." Suffering has a strange power on human hearts. Self-sacrificing suffering moves us strangely. Crucifixion was curse and shame, but it set Christ in the world's eye. No kind of death could so lift him up and compel the dying world to look. And Christ crucified is still the supreme persuasion, the irresistible attraction, to men. Jesus lifted up, an Ensign for the gathering of the people, may be an old and worn story, and it may have lost something of its drawing power for you. Ah! that can only be because men, and men's words, have stood in front of him, and taken your eyes off him. See *him* only. Look to the Ensign, and then you will find your soul asking itself—

> "For whom, for whom, my soul,
> Were all these sorrows borne?"

and you too will feel "the strong attractive power."—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The unity of the race in Messiah's kingdom.* This unity is the great dream

and hope of humanity. It can never be attained in any temporal kingdom, and it could be only a formal and outward unity if it were. No unities of mind or of government are possible; but unity of heart is. Men can be one in God; and one in that spiritual kingdom in which God rules. This verse is used as an argument for what is known as the second coming of Christ. Its force and value in that relation we do not now discuss. The spiritual suggestion of the passage is now before us, and we are to see that Christ is the bond of unity for the world, which never can be one save in his love, in the life he gives, and in the Father-God he reveals. How this unity is to be secured we may fully see by considering the following points concerning Christ's influence.

I. HE ATTRACTS ALL. (See the previous Homily.)

II. HE BREAKS DOWN ALL SEPARATIONS. Of race, class, age, prejudice, religious forms, etc. In him there is "neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. He is all and in all."

III. HE IS SUPERIOR TO ALL PHYSICAL DIFFICULTIES. They come to him from all parts. The Spirit of Christ triumphs over mountains and over seas. It goes into the fever-lands, and gains influence in the frozen zones. Missionaries go everywhere preaching Christ, and his Spirit in them is their heroic mastery of all disabilities.

IV. HE CAN SATISFY ALL HEARTS. Glad hearts and sorrowful ones. Empty hearts and full ones. Lonely hearts and satisfied ones. Dead hearts and yearning ones. He has life, love, truth, rest, hope, peace, at his command; and of this grace he giveth to all men liberally. He can perfect the unity of the race by winning the universal love, the supreme love, which is the life of humanity, and the ensuring of the brotherhood. All men can be sons of the one Father in their love. All men can be brothers, indeed, by the love of their common sonship. Christ is God, and he wins us for God, and he wins us as God.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

Vers. 1—6.—THE SONG OF THANKSGIVING OF THE UNITED CHURCH. On each of her deliverances the Church is bound to praise God. In some parts of the Church it is customary on every such occasion to sing a "Te Deum." The ordinary Israelite hymn of praise appears to have been the hundred and thirty-sixth psalm (1 Chron. xvi. 34, 41; 2 Chron. v. 13; vii. 3; Ezra iii. 11; Jer. xxxiii. 11; 1 Macc. iv. 24); but on extraordinary occasions special thanksgivings were sung (Exod. xv. 1—21; 1 Sam. vii. 18—29, etc.). Isaiah is now inspired to give a pattern song, suitable for the Church to sing when she is reunited, enlarged, and restored to favour.

Ver. 1.—**In that day.** In the day of deliverance and restoration. **Though thou wast angry**; literally, *because thou wast angry*. Kay understands an actual thankfulness for the severe discipline, which had checked them, and not allowed them to glide on smoothly to ruin. But perhaps the idiom is rather that of the passage, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. xi. 25), where it is only the last clause that expresses the true object of the thanksgiving. **Comfortedst**; rather, *hast comforted*, since the effect continued.

Ver. 2.—**God is my salvation** (comp. Ps. xxvii. 1; xxxviii. 22, etc.). The employment of the abstract "salvation" for the concrete "Saviour" is extremely common. **The Lord Jehovah**; literally, *Jah Jehovah*—a combination which occurs only here and in ch. xxvi. 4, where it is again used as an encouragement to perfect confidence and trust. **Is my strength . . . salvation.** This is quoted from the song of Moses (Exod. xv. 2), which the prophet has throughout in his thoughts.

Ver. 3.—**With joy shall ye draw water.** The prophet interrupts the song to give a comforting promise. The "salvation" granted to the Church shall be as an inexhaustible well, from which all comers may draw continually. Compare our Lord's promise to the woman of Samaria in John iv. 14.

Ver. 4.—**Declare his doings among the people**; literally, *among the peoples* (comp. Ps. ix. 11; lxxvii. 12; cvii. 22; cxviii. 17). It is always regarded as one of man's chief duties to testify of God's goodness to others. Here Israel is called upon to publish God's mercies and great deeds to the Gentiles.

His name is exalted. God is in his Name, and his Name expresses his nature. As there is nothing so exalted in all the universe as God, so there is no name so exalted as his Name. Hence his Name is protected by an express commandment.

Ver. 5.—**Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things.** This is another quotation, very slightly modified, from the song of Moses, in which these words were part of the refrain (Exod. xv. 1, 21). **This is known;** rather, *let this be known;* i.e. publish it—noise it abroad.

Ver. 6.—**Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion;** *i.e.* raise a "cry" that may be heard far and wide—a cry that shall be a "shout" of rejoicing. The word translated "inhabitant" is feminine, and designates the entire community or Church that dwells on the holy hill. **For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.** The crowning glory of the Church is the presence of her Lord *in the midst of her*—a presence continuous ("I am with you always"), efficacious (John xv. 4—6), yet invisible (1 Pet. i. 8). The Church is ever to proclaim this presence and rejoice in it.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Christian thanksgiving—its principal characteristics.* There is so much allusion in this thanksgiving song to the "song of Moses," that Isaiah cannot but be supposed to intend some comparison between the two. The occasion, however, of their utterance is so different, and their scale and method of construction so far apart, that it is difficult to draw out in detail any comparison between the two that would not appear forced and unnatural. Moses's song is a burst of gratitude for a particular temporal mercy; the Church's thanksgiving is a constant outpour of thanks and praise for continuous spiritual benefits. The song may, therefore, better be considered in itself, as a model to be borne in mind, and in its main points followed, by the Church in all ages. We may regard separately (1) its form; (2) its matter; (3) its tone and spirit.

I. THE FORM APPROPRIATE FOR THANKSGIVING. The form employed by Isaiah is poetical. His song consists of two stanzas—one of six, the other of seven lines. The lines are of nearly equal length, varying, however, between three and four feet. The predominant foot is the iambic; but there is an admixture of anapæsts and trochees. The details of the form are unimportant, and not readily transferable from poetry so peculiar as the Hebrew to the poetry of modern times and countries. What is mainly important is the simple fact of the thanksgiving being a poem. It does not, of course, bind the Church to express thanksgiving in no other way, but it is a strong argument for the predominant use of poetry for such expression. And the instinct of the Church has been in accordance. From the first she has made the Psalms of David her especial "book of praise." She has found in other parts of Scripture a number of "canticles" framed upon the same Hebrew model, and has adopted them into her services. She has accepted from one of her noblest saints the glorious poem of the "Te Deum." She has found one hymn of praise, worthy of frequent use, in the Apocrypha. And further, she has been prolific herself of hundreds and thousands of sacred songs, written in a score of languages, and in more varieties of metre than can be counted, with which her members delight to praise God in the congregation.

II. THE MATTER APPROPRIATE FOR THANKSGIVING. Thanksgiving is for blessings or benefits received; and the main matter for thanksgiving must always be a mention, more or less full, of the particular blessings or benefits for which the thankfulness is felt. Moses in his "song" dwells at some length on the passage of the Red Sea by Israel, and the destruction of Pharaoh's host which followed (Exod. xv. 1, 4—10, 12). The Church, according to Isaiah, commemorates her deliverance from the wrath of God (ver. 1), her possession of salvation (ver. 2), and the presence of the Holy One of Israel in her midst (ver. 6). In her deliverance are included all the spiritual benefits of the past, in her salvation all the joys and blessings of the future; in the presence of the Holy One is her continual actual delight and happiness—a delight and happiness that words are feeble to paint. What is most remarkable in Isaiah's representation is the absence of all reference to temporal blessings. The spiritual benefits absorb all the thought and attention of the Church's members, and are alone celebrated in their song of rejoicing.

III. THE TONE AND SPIRIT PROPER FOR THANKSGIVING. Thanksgiving may be

formal, cold, and perfunctory, or it may be heartfelt, warm, and full of earnestness. Isaiah's thanksgiving song is a model of hearty, zealous, earnest praise. It expresses (1) gratitude for past favours; (2) joy in present salvation; (3) confidence and trust in God's protecting care for the future; (4) anxiety to make known his mercies and cause his Name to be praised more widely; (5) admiration of his works; (6) adoration of his majesty. The abruptness that characterizes it is a sign of vehemence; the repeated calls upon others to join in indicate a strong craving for sympathy. Altogether the tone resembles that of some of the later psalms, which were, perhaps, written about the same period (see Ps. cxiii., cxvii., cxxxiv., cxlix.).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*A hymn of praise.* Some critics say that the language and the tone of thought are so different here from that of Isaiah, that the hymn cannot be from his pen. The theory seems probable enough that "a copyist or reader, who beheld with joy a fulfilment of the words in ch. xi. 15, 16, on the deliverance from the Babylonian exile, supplemented the oracle with these jubilant words."

I. THE FULL HEART SEEKS RELIEF IN RELIGIOUS SONG. If burdened with the sense of guilt, it must have its litany of grief and deprecation. Pain in the mind, the sense of lonely suffering, readily translates itself into the image of the anger of God. As Madame de Staël justly remarks, "When we suffer, we easily persuade ourselves that we are guilty, and violent griefs carry trouble even into the conscience." And when the suffering ceases, it seems as if a cloud had passed from the sky, and the anger of God were allayed. He who had been the Judge now appears as the Saviour; the heart that had been trembling as the bruised reed is now strong as if the feet were based on eternal rock. Awhile dejected in the extreme, "writing bitter things against itself," presently it is filled with boasting and triumph in the sense of possessing God, nay, of being possessed by God. There is a long gamut of religious feeling; in critical moments the heart may run through every tone in the scale. In the simple life of feeling the religious spirit expatiates. The habit of flower, of bird, of child, opening to the sun, singing in the spring-time, is the reflection of that of the soul. We do not suffer our memories of a long and dreary winter to mar our enjoyment of the genial breath, the odours, sights, and sounds of spring-time. Nor should the sense of the long struggles, doubly wintry seasons of the hiding of God's face from the soul, linger in those moments when the Sun of righteousness returns with healing in his wings, and salvation is for the present a fact, no longer a hope.

II. THE FITNESS AND BEAUTY OF THANKSGIVING. To withhold thanks from an earthly benefactor, whose hand has extracted us from a state of peril or need, is to show a deformed soul. To seal the fount of joyous religious expression, is the way to have presently nothing to express. For if expression follows naturally on feeling, so the cultivation of religious expression tends to form and to enrich the feeling itself. Nothing artificial is recommended; but it is well to recognize that sentiment, no less than thought, remains poorer than it need be without training and tillage. This psalm probably belongs to the period to which the last section of the psalter belongs; they are songs of deliverance, songs of return from exile, as those which immediately precede them refer to the dispersion. If the latter soothe us by the profound insight into suffering and sympathy with the soul in its seeming loneliness and exile from God, no less, maybe, the psalms of the return educate us in hope, reminding us that we are on our way to God, that our spiritual exile draws to its close, and "every winter yields to spring."—J.

Ver. 3.—*A religion of blessedness.* "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Religion is not only safety, it is blessedness—the very highest blessedness. We are not to be ever in fear and trembling about "our state," but to remember that "perfect love casteth out fear." A really religious man finds that he cannot do without the gospel as satisfying his entire being. He is not religious because he "ought to be," or must be, to be saved; he is religious because also it is truest joy.

I. WATER MUST BE DRAWN. Certainly. The wells of truth are deep and clear, but we must come hither in one sense to draw. It is quite true that the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well said to the Saviour, "Give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither *to draw*," and that Jesus told her the water he should give her should be *in her* "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." But at the same time, we must remember that Jesus spake a parable about "the treasure hid in a field." The ideas are both true. For the Christian there is a hidden blessedness, but it needs discovering by the Word and the Spirit of God. Every quiet meditation, every prayerful perusal of the sacred page,—this is a drawing of water out of the wells of salvation.

II. WATER WILL BE JOYFULLY DRAWN. Not "must be," but "will be." You cannot command "pleasure;" you can "duty." You can make the child or the man read Scripture, but only life within will lead them to draw water "with joy." The art-student loves to wander in the foreign galleries and to gaze upon the highest ideals of art. We listen to music so differently when we love and delight in it. And a quickened soul loves religion for its own sake.

III. WATER MUST BE DISTRIBUTED WHEN DRAWN. We can "give" the cup as well as drink of the cup. It is the water that is so precious, not the wooden cup or the golden chalice that contains it. It is not new "theories" and "views" and "opinions" that are precious, but the Word of the living God, which is the pure water of life, and of which whoso drink shall live; for the written Word all leads to the living Word—Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men.

IV. THE MANY WELLS ARE FED BY ONE FOUNTAIN. History or prophecy; Gospel or Epistle; precept or promise; the record of Paradise lost, in Genesis; or the story of Paradise regained, in the Apocalypse;—all these are filled from the same Divine fountain. It is the Spirit that testifies of Christ; for "the testimony of Jesus" is the theme of history and "the spirit of prophecy." Many wells! Yes; but "all my springs are in *thee*."—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*Reconciliation with God.* These words may have—

I. A NATIONAL FULFILMENT. The Jews might have taken these words into their lips after the discomfiture of Sennacherib, or, with fuller meaning later on, after the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. vi. 15, 16). Other nations, after retributive sufferings and signal deliverances or restorations, may appropriately use this reverent language.

II. THEIR FULFILMENT IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MANY AN INDIVIDUAL LIFE. 1. *There is spiritual declension.* A man has been living professedly in the service of God, but his devotion has been dying down, his obedience has been growing lax, his usefulness has been diminishing and may have come down to nothing. 2. *Then comes Divine correction.* God speaks to him in chastening love; he sends the affliction that is intended to awaken him from his half-heartedness in the service and cause of Christ. 3. *Then comes conviction and amendment* on his part; a return to the higher and worthier life he lived before. 4. *And then the chastisement is removed.* (Ps. ciii. 8, 9.) God's anger is visibly, sensibly, consciously "turned away;" the heavenly Father "comforts" him with his loving favour; and there follows: 5. *The grateful and joyous song of praise.*

III. THEIR FULFILMENT IN THE EXPERIENCE OF EVERY GOOD MAN. In the case of every one who enters into the full heritage of those Messianic blessings which are the subject of prophecy in this chapter, there will be found: 1. *A sense of Divine displeasure;* reason enough for saying, "O Lord, thou *art* angry with me." The word "anger" in its honourable sense is certainly referable to the Divine mind. We are not to identify the faulty irritation of which we are too often conscious with the "anger" which is here and elsewhere applied to the Supreme. That feeling, at once holy and painful, which a faithful father feels towards his son when he has done something which is shamefully wrong, is the feeling, deepened, refined, ennobled by divinity, which the heavenly Father and righteous Ruler feels toward us when we sin against him and against his holy Law. We may call it by that name which is most significant or appropriate to our own thought, but, however it may be denoted, it becomes us to recognize the fact, to be *affected* and to be *afflicted* by the fact, that God, the holy and loving One, feels towards those who have wilfully broken his laws or who deliberately

reject his overtures of mercy, a serious Divine displeasure. He is pained, grieved, angry. He blames us, he condemns us, he holds us to be deserving of retribution. 2. *The removal of God's wrath.* Two things are needed for this: (1) repentance and (2) faith (see Acts xx. 21); the turning of the heart, and therefore of the life, from selfishness and sin; and the cordial acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Propitiation for our sin and the Sovereign of our soul. *Without* these we have no right to look for the turning away of God's anger; with these we may be perfectly assured of it. 3. *An abiding sense of the Divine favour.* "Thou comfortedst me." God's "comfort" is not always simultaneous with the exercise of his mercy; there may be an interval of no short duration between the act of Divine forgiveness and that blessed sense of reconciliation which we call "assurance of salvation" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, 7, 11). Let no one despond because he does not find himself possessed of inward peace and sacred joy as soon as his heart turns to God and to his salvation. Let such a one continue to ask, to seek, to trust, to hope, and in due time the light will shine into the soul. It does not always come as the lightning-flash—one moment the blackness of darkness and the next a dazzling light—but often as comes the returning day; first a few streaks of morning, then the darkness turning into grey, then the deepening light as the hours advance, at length the full brilliancy of noon. 4. *A life of songful gratitude.* "At that day," and through all remaining days, until the night of death shall usher in the endless morning of immortality, the comforted heart will say, "O Lord, I will praise thee."—C.

Ver. 2.—*The greatness of God's goodness.* We have in these words the very exuberance of holy feeling. They refer us to—

I. THE SUPREME ACT OF GOD'S GOODNESS. "God is my Salvation." He has been wonderfully gracious to us in *bestowal*—in the gifts of our being, of our spiritual nature with its varied capacities, of our physical nature with all its organs of activity and enjoyment, of our human relationships, of a rich and beautiful dwelling-place, etc. But his greatest kindness is felt by us to be in *deliverance*, in that which is called "salvation." Here, again, there is an ascent in the scale of Divine goodness; for higher than salvation from trouble, from sickness, from death, from personal captivity or political servitude, stands *salvation from sin*; and in the Messianic era this spiritual deliverance reaches its highest point; for it includes not only the negative side of rescue from present evil, but also the positive side of enrichment with corresponding good. It embraces: 1. Redemption from sin—its *penalty* and its *power* (its thraldom and its defilement). 2. Restoration to God—to his *favour* and to his *likeness*. 3. The hope of a higher and endless life in another world.

II. THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS GREATEST GIFT IN IMPARTING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH. He "forsakes not the work of his own hands." Having redeemed us from the power and condemnation of sin, and lifted us up into the state of sonship and heirship, he sustains us in our new and blessed life. "The Lord Jehovah is our Strength." He imparts the needful strength for maintenance in our course by (1) the privileges of the gospel; (2) the discipline of his holy providence; (3) the direct influences of his own Spirit.

III. THE RESPONSE OF OUR HEARTS TO THE DIVINE LOVE. 1. *The gratitude which finds utterance in sacred song.* "The Lord . . . is my Song" (see Ps. cxix. 54). The Christian man should carry in his heart such a sense of God's redeeming love that he should be always ready to break forth into praise; his life should be a song of gratitude for the salvation of the Lord. 2. *The confidence which excludes anxiety.* "I will trust, and not be afraid." (1) Many are the occasions of human fear and anxiety—the honourable maintenance of the family; the preservation of our personal integrity, both moral and spiritual; the faithful discharge of duty in the post we have undertaken to fill; the adorning of our Christian profession; our passage through the gateway of death, etc. (2) We are wholly insufficient of ourselves to meet these, and to triumph over them (2 Cor. iii. 5). (3) But, confiding in God, we may go forth without anxiety, assured of his Divine help (Ps. xxvii. 1; lvi. 11—13; cxviii. 6—8; Heb. xiii. 5, 6).—C.

Ver. 3.—*The joy of Christ's salvation.* These words of prophecy must have been

peculiarly precious to those who first heard them. They sound very musical to us, but they must seem more melodious still to the Oriental ear. We know that water is an invaluable thing, but it is only they who have lived or travelled in tropical countries that appreciate all that is meant by burning drought or by refreshing streams. And as words gather sweetness and excellency to the ear as they become associated with that which we most prize, so we may be sure that the words "water" and "wells" had a most inviting sound to the people of Palestine, and that this passage had (as we should say) a "golden ring" in the hearing of the Jews. It may bring before us the joy which springs from the salvation of Jesus Christ in the several stages of our experience.

I. PROFOUND AND MOST BLESSED PEACE. It is said that the most exquisite sensation that mortal man enjoys is experienced in the sudden cessation of excruciating pain. Similarly we may truly say that the most profound satisfaction of the soul is felt in a blessed consciousness of the removal of Divine condemnation; in other words, in a sense of forgiven sin. The "peace of God" not only "passeth understanding," but it is a truer and a deeper calm than any other which is born of outward circumstance or human favour. This frequently passes into—

II. THE JOY WHICH RISES INTO HOLY RAPTURE. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God; . . . and not only so, but we also *joy* in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1, 11). The sense of God's fatherly love, the conviction that sin, condemnation, death, hell—all the really evil and harmful things—are left behind for ever, and that before us is an ever-ascending path of wisdom, righteousness, and joy, will awaken in the soul a rapturous delight compared with which the excitements and delectations of earth are very poor affairs.

III. THE JOYOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE SOUL THROUGHOUT ALL ITS CHRISTIAN COURSE. With joy we "draw water." In the activities that are distinctively Christian we find a positive delight—a source of satisfaction which does not injure, but ennoble; which does not pall and fade, but abide and deepen. In the course of our Christian experience we have: 1. *The joy of praise;* of pouring forth our trust and gratitude in strains of sacred song, "singing and making melody in the heart." 2. *The joy of fellowship;* holding glad communion with the heavenly Father, with the Divine Friend of our spirits; holding reverent and rejoicing intercourse with him both in social worship and in the hour of solitude; having, also, happy and heart-gladdening "fellowship one with another." 3. *The joy of hope;* the eager anticipation of a blessedness and glory which will follow the strife and suffering of this present time. Learn (1) the folly of refusing this heritage of joy; (2) the serious and mischievous mistake of giving a joyless impression of Christian service.—C.

Vers. 4—6.—*Exultation and activity.* There is a jubilant strain throughout these verses; not, however, without a sense of some sacred duty to be performed. We learn—

I. THAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST MAY WELL SPEAK IN THE ACCENTS OF EXULTATION. The terms of the prophecy do not seem to be satisfied with anything less than Messianic blessings; they fit perfectly the estate to which Christ has called us; they belong to that "kingdom of heaven" of which the Son of man had so much to say (see Matt. xiii.). The Church may exult in that: 1. *God has done such great things for her,* in (1) the large and long preparation, through many ages, for her redemption; (2) the supreme act of Divine revelation in the person of his Son; (3) the wonderful sacrifice of himself he made on its behalf (2 Cor. viii. 9); (4) the lofty privileges to which he has summoned it—holy service, affectionate sonship, eager-hearted heirship. 2. *God himself, the mighty and victorious One, is dwelling in the midst of it.* "Great is the Holy One." If the family is proud of its honoured father, the army of its invincible captain, the nation of its illustrious sovereign, how much more shall the Church exult in its almighty and victorious Lord! He is great in all the elements of greatness—in external majesty, in intrinsic excellency, in overcoming energy, in transcendent beauty, in the everlasting character of his kingdom.

II. THAT EXULTATION DOES WELL TO PASS SOON INTO HOLY AND BENEFICENT ACTIVITY. Blending with these accents of triumph, and harmonizing with them, is the voice of

exhortation, the summons to useful activity: "Praise the Lord;" "Call upon his Name;" "Declare his doings;" "Be this known [let this be known] in all the earth." Jehovah's greatness could only be known among the nations by the united and continuous testimony of the people of God. The glories of his grace, as they shine in the face of Jesus Christ, are to be beheld by all peoples; but they must be reflected from the lives and published by the lips of his faithful servants. It is the privilege and the duty of the Church to carry the knowledge of his Name and truth to the utmost ends of the earth. It is well to rejoice, "to sing for joy," to indulge in pious exultation; it is better to act in such a way that neighbouring nations (cities, districts, streets, homes) shall draw from the wells of this great salvation the waters of eternal life; better, both because (1) we communicate blessing thereby, and because (2) we gain increase of spiritual worth by so doing.—C.

Ver. 2.—*Holy joy in God.* In each national history there is some one surpassingly great event. A Thermopylæ for Greece; a Leipsic for Germany; a Moscow for Russia; a Waterloo for England. The Jews had one great event, supreme in its influence on their national life. By his relation to that event God would even be known. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." All other deliverances, accomplished afterwards, were treated but as reminders of this. All songs of thanksgiving, sung over subsequent redemptions, were modelled after the "song of Moses," of which the chorus was sung by tens of thousands, led by the timbrels and dances of the women, on the further shores of the sea. And there was much in that event which fitted it to hold such a place in the thoughts of generations. It was the deliverance which, once and for ever, assured the world of the fact that God —the One, living, and true God—was the God of the Jewish race. One can hardly imagine the excitement and the triumph of that time. The mightiest nation of that day roused itself, in a paroxysm of furious revenge, to pursue and to destroy what it regarded as a crowd of fleeing slaves. What hope could there be for such a multitude, when the king himself, a host of armed warriors, prancing horses, mighty chariots, pressed on after them; when the pathless waters of a great sea waved and rolled before them, and the mountains hemmed them in on the further side? If we were reading common human history, such a story could only have ended somewhat in this way: "And the frightened crowds of fugitives were pressed on and on into the pitiless waters, or were ruthlessly cut down and slain by the advancing hosts." But we are reading a page out of sacred history. There are the words, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God;" and, behold, those waters are arrested in their flowing; they roll back in swelling heaps; the ocean bed lies bare; and those "slaves" step steadily across the strangest pathway ever made for mortal feet to tread. Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen dash boldly forward into the way that was not made for them. The Red Sea was bright with the banners, and flashed with the shields of warriors; and then—dragging wheels, softening sands, hurrying waves, and the pride of Egypt is broken: "Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen hath he cast into the sea." God was magnified that day, magnified in deliverance, and magnified in judgment. He was that day the Salvation of his people, and they stood upon the shores of that flood, uniting in one triumphant shout, and saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously." The verses preceding the text allude to this scene. The spiritual blessings of Messiah's reign are described under the figure of this passage of the sea. From all spiritual scatterings and bondages and captivities, Messiah shall bring his people. The text is part of a song to be sung by the spiritually ransomed—a song formed, partly, upon the model of that older song of Moses. We gather from it that a spirit of humble and trustful joy in God is the proper spirit for redeemed souls to cherish.

I. REASONS FOR MAINTAINING A SPIRIT OF HOLY JOY IN GOD. Too often the sombre sides of Christian experience are dwelt on, and young people take needlessly dark notions of the pious life. The model of the Christliness is not the calm sister of mercy, but the self-denying mother, the gentle, thoughtful, active elder sister, the strong man, whose bright face and cheery words and sinless laugh can kindle the gladness of those around him. The Bible is full of song. Its face can, indeed, settle into the severest gravity, into the sternness of righteous indignation, into a tenderness of sympathy; but the face of the Bible can also break into smiles. Ripples cross ripples, and waves leap

over waves, on the surface of its sea; it can waken our faculty of song, it can fill our life with its joy in God. It is well, however, for us to distinguish between "happiness" and "joy." It would be true to say that religion does not promise happiness, it promises joy. It would even be true to say, that religion does not promise happiness because it promises joy. "Joy" is so much deeper, so much more satisfying and blessed, that he who has it will never ask for happiness. Observe the distinction in the meaning of the words. "Happiness" is pleasure in something that may "hap," or "happen;" pleasure in things outside us—in circumstances, in excitements—and so it cannot be abiding and unchanging. All days cannot be sunny. All lives cannot be painless and sorrowless. All circumstances cannot please. He who wants happiness has to depend on the variable conditions of a sin-stricken and, therefore, sorrow-filled earth. Mere happiness too often proves only "as the crackling of thorns under a pot." But "joy" means "leaping out," pleasure that gushes forth from a fountain within us, in streams ever refreshing the desert circumstances around us, and making them "blossom as a rose." Pleasure that beams out its holy rays, as from a central sun of bliss dwelling in our heart, and gilding everything about us, making the very light brighter, the clouds to scatter, or to be flushed with crimson glories, and turning even the night to day. The Christian man has no security of mere happiness. He must share the common mingled heritage of sunshine and shadow, health and sickness, friendship and loss, pleasures and disappointments, success and failure. But he may be secure of joy. "He that believeth on me," said the Lord Jesus, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And close by our text we read, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The one great reason for joy is stated to be that "God is become our Salvation." We joy in God (1) as the unchanging One; (2) as the almighty One; (3) as the all-loving One; (4) as the redeeming One. It is, we have seen, a memory of deliverances which calls forth into expression the trustful joy of our text. And what have we to say of gifts bestowed, sicknesses healed, broken hearts comforted, bondages of evil broken up? We keep the word "salvation" too exclusively for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God; we want it to include all the multiplied and ever-repeated deliverances and rescuings and recoverings of God. Matthew Henry says, "God is my Salvation; not my Saviour only, by whom I am saved, but my 'Salvation,' in whom I am safe. He shall have the glory of all the salvations which have been wrought in me, and from him only will I expect all the future salvations I may need." The salvation of God's ancient people was not the deliverance from Egypt only, but that together with a thousand other deliverances scattered over their history. And so we joy in God because he saves us from *all* our bondages. He saves us from pride, from inward lusts, from outward evils. He saves us from greed, and covetousness, and clinging to the world, and envyings, and backbitings, and unforgivings, and failing charity. Souls can never sing that have such fetters on them; but he proclaims "liberty to the captive, and opening of the prison to them that are bound."

II. THE HALLOWING INFLUENCE WHICH A SPIRIT OF HOLY JOY IN GOD WOULD EXERT ON OURSELVES, AND ON THOSE AROUND US. In ordinary life the men of sanguine, hopeful temperament are usually the successful men. Despondent, doubting men accomplish but little. The invigorating of hope makes men mightier than their difficulties. It is the same in Christian life. Doubt and fear hinder. Hope cheers. Joy puts song into work. Ought a Christian to live in a minor key? Songs pitched thus will never cheer himself, or any one about him. Joyful Christians are a joy to themselves, and to all around them. The homes are brightened by them; the children learn to watch their faces, and to listen for their words; our Churches rejoice in the sunny-souled members Everybody is glad in the man whose very presence seems to say, "Sing unto the Lord a new song." Such Christians let us all seek to be.

"Ye pilgrims on the road
To Zion's city, sing;
Sing on, rejoicing every day
In Christ th' eternal King."

R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Faith and fear.* "I will trust, and not be afraid." This expression reminds us (1) of our *liability to fear*, and (2) of the *power of faith to overcome fear.*

I. OUR LIABILITY TO FEAR. 1. As dependent creatures. 2. Because of the great mysteries of existence that are around us—mysteries of God; of self; of sin; of providence; of judgment; of the future. 3. In view of the possibility of our own failure from goodness.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH TO OVERCOME FEAR. Trust can (1) keep hold of the promises; (2) see satisfying visions of God himself. He who is "for us is more than all they that can be against us." "This faith—this simple believing trust in God—will keep the soul in quietness in view of all the mysteries, and of all the dark possibilities of life and death. When reason is at fault, when wisdom gropes for the way and falls into the ditch, when strength trembles and sinks into feebleness, *faith* keeps the heart in quietness and confidence. Whence has it this power? Because it rests on Divine declarations, deeper and wider than natural laws; on Divine promises, surer than the hills; on Divine power, stronger than gravitation and the sweep of ten thousand worlds; nay, on a Divine Person, in whom all faithfulness, power, and love for ever dwell" (Dr. A. Raleigh).—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The wells of salvation.* A very expressive image in a hot country. Wells are treated in contrast with cisterns, which only store the drainage of the ground. Wells are fed from springs and storehouses treasured in the heart of the earth. Inside Carisbrooke Castle is a deep well, which ensured constant supply for the garrison, however closely the castle might be besieged. Salvation is like a well; forth from it ever comes "living water." It is not like a man-made cistern, which only holds a limited quantity, and is apt to fail in the supreme hour of need. There may be a reference to the custom associated with one of the great feasts. On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles—some say on each day—the Jews used to bring water in a golden pitcher from the fountain of Siloam, and pour it, mingled with wine, on the sacrifice on the altar, with great rejoicing. Illustrating the joy of finding fresh and living water in hot countries, "it is said that while the French engineers were boring for water in the African desert, the Arabs looked on in silent wonder, until they saw the precious stream actually gushing forth, and then their joy knew no bounds; and sweet and precious as the cooling waters are now to the weary labouring child of the desert, so precious were they to the people to whom the words of the prophet were originally addressed; and the promise to them of an indefinite supply of that element would be highly appreciated by them, and well calculated to inspire their gratitude and joy." The idea of the text may be thus given: Out of the wells of salvation in God, who is the Fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy. Matthew Henry suggests three good topics for meditation. "1. God's promises, revealed, ratified, and given out to us in his ordinances, are wells of salvation; wells of the Saviour (so some read it), for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us and made over to us. 2. It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that are treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there, and all our fresh streams to be thence (Ps. lxxxvii. 7). 3. Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him, and rejoice in him (Deut. xxvi. 11); be joyful in his house of prayer (ch. lvi. 7), and keep his feasts with gladness (Acts ii. 46)." Like well-water, salvation is—

I. EVER FRESH. And so ever pleasant.

II. EVER ABUNDANT. Fulness for whosoever will. Compare cisterns, or wadys of deserts. Salvation is a perennial fount, a "perpetual tide; it flows for you, for me, for all."

III. EVER FREE. Nobody can seal up this fountain.

IV. EVER HEALTH-GIVING. Restoring, requickening. It is healing for the sick, strength for the disabled, life for those "dead in trespasses and sins." What can surpass in power to bring us joy our sense of the fitness and the fulness of the "great," the "common" salvation?—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God's new name the old one glorified.* "Call upon his Name," which is, in Messiah, "Jehovah Jesus," "Immanuel Jesus," or "God with us saving us from our sins." To call upon God's Name is to publicly give him the glory that is his due.

I. THE OLD NAME IS GOD THE PROVIDER. The God who meets and supplies all ordinary human wants. "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The God of whom Jacob could say, "He fed me all my life long." The God "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." "Who giveth to each his meat in due season." "Who crowneth us with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies: who satisfieth our mouth with good things."

II. THE NEW NAME IS GOD THE SAVIOUR. Who "redeemeth our life from destruction." Who "delivers from going down to the pit." Who "gave himself a Ransom for us." Who brought "deliverance for the captives, and opening of the prison to them that are bound." Who is "able to save unto the uttermost." Who is "exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins."

III. THE NEW NAME ONLY TELLS OF GOD PROVIDING FOR MAN'S SOREST NEED AND SADDEST CONDITION. He is not just *in trouble;* he is *in sin.* Stained with it, bruised with it, degraded by it, in peril through it, made helpless by it. The man in sin cannot save himself; no fellow-man can save him. The Hero from Bozrah, who speaks in righteousness, alone is "mighty to save" (ch. lxiii. 1).—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*God honoured through his mercies.* "Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things." A comprehensive term, summing up all that God had done for his people through the long ages. The Hebrew indicates an echo from Exod. xv. 1, "He hath triumphed gloriously." Reviewing God's wondrous workings, we may regard them from three points of view.

I. THEY ARE THINGS WHICH WE OUGHT TO ADMIRE.

II. THEY ARE THINGS WHICH WE OUGHT TO STUDY.

III. THEY ARE THINGS WHICH WE OUGHT TO FEEL. Because of their graciousness to us as *frail,* and their mercifulness to us as *sinners.* The great glory of God is his mercy. Christ is the embodiment of mercy. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works towards the sons of men!" Thy mercy "endureth for ever."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BURDEN OF BABYLON. The series of prophecies which commences with this chapter and continues to the close of ch. xxiii., is connected together by the word *massa,* burden. It has been argued that the term "burden" is an incorrect translation of *massa,* as used by Isaiah and later prophets (Nah. i. 1; Hab. i. 1; Zech. ix. 1; xii. 1; Mal. i. 1); and that "utterance," or "prophecy," would be more suitable (comp. Prov. xxx. 1; xxxi. 1, where *massa* is thus rendered in the Authorized Version). But the facts remain that *massa* means a "burden" in the ordinary sense, and that the prophecies to which it is prefixed are generally (in Isaiah always) of a denunciatory character. The translation may therefore be allowed to stand—at any rate in the present chapter.

It is remarkable that Babylon heads the list of the Church's enemies in the present catalogue. Dr. Kay supposes the term "Babel" to be equivalent to "Asshur-Babel," and to designate "the Assyro-Babylonian Empire." He thinks that "Babel" heads the list on account of Assyria's position, under Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser, in the van of Israel's adversaries. But neither Isaiah nor any other sacred writer knows of an Assyro-Babylonian kingdom or empire. Assyria and Babylonia are distinct kingdoms in Genesis (x. 8—12), in 2 Kings (xviii.—xx.), in 2 Chron. (xxxii.), in Isaiah (xxxvi.—xxxix.) and in Ezekiel (xxiii. and xxx., xxxi.). They had been at war almost continuously for above seven centuries before the time of Isaiah ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. pp. 81—104). Assyria had, on the whole, proved the stronger of the two, and had from time to time for a longer or a shorter period held Babylonia in subjection. But the two countries were never more one than Russia and Poland, and, until Tiglath-Pileser assumed the crown of Babylon in 729 B.C., they had always been under separate monarchs. Individually, I can only account for the high position here given to Babylon by the prophet,

on the supposition that it was thus early (about 725 B.C.) revealed to him that Babylonia was the great enemy to be feared—the ultimate destroyer of Judah and Jerusalem, the power that would carry the Jewish people into captivity.

Ver. 1.—**Which Isaiah . . . did see** (comp. ch. i. 1; ii. 1, etc.). Isaiah always "sees" his prophecies, whether they are of the nature of visions (as ch. vi.) or the contrary. The word is probably used to express the strong conviction that he has of their absolute certainty.

Ver. 2.—**Lift ye up a banner**; rather, *a standard*—"an ensign," as in ch. v. 26; xi. 12. "Ensigns" were used both by the Assyrians and the Egyptians. "Banners," or flags, do not seem to have been employed in the ancient world. **Upon the high mountain**; rather, *upon a bare mountain*—one that was clear of trees, so that the signal might be the better seen from it. God's army having to be summoned against Babylon, the summons is made in three ways: (1) by a signal or ensign lifted up on a high hill; (2) by a loud call or shout; and (3) by waving or beckoning with the hand. The whole description is, of course, pure metaphor. **That they may go into the gates of the nobles.** Either that they may enter into the palaces of the grandees in Babylon, or that they may take the towns of the tributary princes.

Ver. 3.—**I have commanded my sanctified ones.** The pronoun "I" is emphatic—"I myself." Not only will an external summons go forth, but God will lay his own orders on them whom he chooses for his instruments, and bid them come to the muster. All who carry out his purposes are, in a certain sense, "sanctified ones" (comp. Jer. xxii. 7; li. 27; Zeph. i. 7, etc.). Here the Medes and Persians are specially intended (see ver. 17). **For mine anger**; *i.e.* "for the purpose of executing my anger." **Even them that rejoice in my highness**; rather, *my proudly exultant ones* (Cheyne, Rosenmüller, Gesenius). Æschylus calls the Persians *ὑπερκόμπους* ('Persæ,' l. 827); Herodotus, *ὑβριστάς* (i. 41). The high spirits, however, natural to gallant soldiers on going out to war, rather than any special haughtiness or arrogancy, are intended.

Ver. 4.—**The noise of a multitude in the mountains.** I do not know why Isaiah should not have been "thinking of his geography" (Cheyne). As soon as the Greeks knew anything of the Persians, they knew of them as a *mountain* people, and attributed their valour and their hardy habits to the physical character of their country (Herod., ix. *ad fin.*). Jeremiah connects the invading army which destroyed Babylon with mountains, when he derives it from Ararat (comp. Gen. viii. 4), Minni (Armenia), and Ashchenaz (Jer. li. 27). At any rate, the mention of "mountains" here is very appropriate, both Media and Persia being, in the main, mountainous countries. **A great people**; or, *much people*—not necessarily of one nation only. **The host of the battle**; rather, *a host of war*; i.e. a multitude of men, armed and prepared for war.

Ver. 5.—**They come from a far country** (comp. ch. xlvi. 11). Both Media and Persia were "far countries" to the Hebrews, Persia especially. There is no indication that they knew of any countries more remote towards the East. Hence the expression which follows, "from the end of heaven"—the heaven being supposed to end where the earth ended. Isaiah, like the other sacred writers, conforms his language on cosmical subjects to the opinions of his day. **Even the Lord.** With a most effective anthropomorphism, Jehovah is made to march with the army that he has mustered (ver. 4) against the land that has provoked his wrath—*i.e.* Babylonia. **The weapons** (comp. ch. x. 15; Jer. l. 25; li. 20). **To destroy the whole land.** Many critics would render *hâ-âretz* by "the earth" here. It may be granted that the language of the prophecy goes beyond the occasion in places (especially vers. 11 and 13), and passes from Babylon to that wicked world of which Babylon is a type; but, where the context permits, it seems better to restrict than to expand the meaning of the words employed.

Ver. 6.—**Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand** (comp. Joel i. 15); literally, the expression used in both passages is *a day of Jehovah.* The idiom would not, however, allow the use of the article, so that the phrase is ambiguous. "*The* day of Jehovah" is properly "that crisis in the history of the world when Jehovah will interpose to rectify the evils of the present, bringing joy and glory to the humble believer, and misery and shame to the proud and disobedient" (Cheyne). But any great occasion when God passes judgment on a nation is called in Scripture "*a* day of the Lord," "*a* coming of Christ." And so here the day of the judgment upon Babylon seems to be intended. **It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.** Isaiah is thought to quote from Joel (i. 15) here; but perhaps both prophets quoted from an earlier author. Shaddai (equivalent to "Almighty") is an ancient name of God, most rarely used by the prophetical writers (only here, and in Ezek. i. 24; x. 5; Joel i. 15), and never elsewhere by either Isaiah or Joel. It has generally been said to mean "the Strong One;" but recently the theory has found favour that it meant originally "the Sender of storms," from the Arabic

sh'dâ—jecit, effudit. However this may be, the word is certainly used in the later times mainly to express God's power to visit and punish, and the present passage might perhaps be best translated, "It shall come as a destruction from the Destroyer (*k'shôd mish-Shaddai yabo'*)."

Ver. 7.—**Therefore shall all hands be faint** (comp. Jer. l. 43; Ezek. vii. 17; Zeph. iii. 16). There shall be a general inaction and apathy. Recently discovered accounts of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus show a great want of activity and vigour on the part of the defenders. **Every man's heart shall melt** (comp. Deut. xx. 8; Josh. ii. 11; v. 1, etc.). The general inaction will spring from a general despondency. This statement agrees much better with the recently discovered documents than does the statement of Herodotus, that, safe within their walls, the Babylonians despised their assailants, and regarded themselves as perfectly secure.

Ver. 8.—**They shall be afraid**; rather, *dismayed.* **Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them**; literally, *they shall take hold of pangs and sorrows.* **They shall be amazed**; rather, *look aghast.* **Their faces** shall be as flames. I know no better explanation than that of Dr. Kay, that a sudden transition is intended from despondency to extreme excitement.

Ver. 9.—**The day of the Lord** (see the comment on ver. 6). **Cruel**; *i.e.* severe and painful, not really "cruel." **To lay the land desolate.** As in ver. 5, so here, many would translate *hâ-âretz* by "the earth," and understand a desolation extending far beyond Babylonia. But this is not necessary.

Ver. 10.—**The stars of heaven . . . shall not give their light.** Nature sympathizes with her Lord. When he is angry, the light of the heavens grows dark. So it was at the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. xxvii. 45); so it will be at the end of the world (Matt. xxiv. 29). So it is often, if not always, at the time of great judgments. **The constellations**; literally, *the Orions.* *Kesil*, the Fool, was the Hebrew name of the constellation of Orion, who was identified with Nimrod, the type of that impious folly which contends against God. From its application to this particular group of stars (Job ix. 9; xxxviii. 31; Amos v. 8), the word came to be applied to constellations in general. The Babylonians very early marked out the sky into constellations.

Ver. 11.—**I will punish the world for their evil.** Here the prophecy certainly goes beyond the destruction of Babylon, and becomes a general warning to the wicked of all countries. Each country is to feel that its turn will come. Punishment will fall especially on the unjust, the proud, and the haughty (comp. ch. i. 28; ii. 11—17, etc.).

Ver. 12.—**I will make a man more precious than fine gold** (comp. ch. iv. 1). Population shall be so diminished that man shall be the most highly esteemed of commodities. The more scanty the supply of a thing, the greater its value. **The golden wedge of Ophir**; rather, *pure gold of Ophir.* Ophir is mentioned as a gold-region in 1 Kings ix. 28; x. 11; xxii. 48; 1 Chron. xxix. 4; 2 Chron. viii. 18; ix. 10; Job xxii. 24; xxviii. 16; Ps. xlv. 9. Its locality is uncertain. Gold of Ophir appears to have been considered especially pure.

Ver. 13.—**I will shake the heavens** (comp. Joel iii. 16; Hag. ii. 7; Matt. xxiv. 29). In general, this sign is mentioned in connection with the end of the world, when a "new heaven and a new earth" are to supersede the old (ch. lxv. 17; lxvi. 22; Rev. xxi. 1). Isaiah may, perhaps, pass here from signs connected with the fall of Babylon to those which will announce the last day — each "day of the Lord" being, as already observed, a type of the final and great day (see the comment on ver. 6). Or, possibly, the allusion may be to some "shaking" by God of a supra-mundane kingdom as preliminary to his passing judgment on Babylon (so Dr. Kay; comp. ch. xxiv. 21).

Ver. 14.—**It shall be as the chased roe.** When the visitation comes on Babylon, there shall be a loosening of all ties between her and the subject nations. Her armies shall disband themselves, the pressed soldiers from foreign countries deserting, and hastening with all speed to their several homes. A flight of the foreign traders and visitors may also be glanced at. **As a sheep that no man taketh up**; rather, *as sheep with none to gather them.*

Ver. 15.—**Every one that is found . . . every one that is joined** unto them; *i.e.* all the population, both native and foreign.

Ver. 16.—**Their children also shall be dashed to pieces.** In the barbarous warfare of the time, even children were not spared (see Ps. cxxxvii. 9; Nah. iii. 10; Hos. xiii. 16). When a town was taken by assault, they were ruthlessly slaughtered. When spared, it was only to be dragged off as captives, and to become the slaves of their captors in a foreign land. Assyrian sculptures often illustrate this latter practice. **Their wives ravished** (comp. Lam. v. 11; Zech. xiv. 2).

Ver. 17.—**Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them.** Isaiah's knowledge that the Medes should take a leading part in the destruction of Babylon is, no doubt, as surprising a fact as almost any other in the entire range of prophetic foresight, or insight, as set before us in Scripture. The Medes were known to Moses as an ancient nation of some importance (Gen. x. 2); but

since his time had been unmentioned by any sacred writer; and, as a *living* nation, had only just come within the range of Israelite vision, by the fact that, when Sargon deported the Samaritans from Samaria, he placed some of them "in the cities of the Medes" (2 Kings xvii. 6). The Assyrians had become acquainted with them somewhat more than a century earlier, and had made frequent incursions into their country, finding them a weak and divided people, under the government of a large number of petty chiefs. Sargon had conquered a portion of the tribes, and placed prefects in the cities; at the same time planting colonists in them from other parts of the empire. That, when the weakness of Media was being thus made apparent, Isaiah should have foreseen its coming greatness can only be accounted for by his having received a Divine communication on the subject. Subsequently, he had a still more exact and complete communication (ch. xxi. 2). **Which shall not regard silver.** The Medes were not a particularly disinterested people; but in the attack on Babylon, made by Cyrus, the object was not plunder, but conquest and the extension of dominion. The main treasures of Babylon—those in the great temple of Belus—were not carried off by Cyrus, as appears both from his own inscriptions, and from Herodotus (i. 181—183).

Ver. 18.—**Their bows** (comp. Jer. l. 9, 14). Both the Medes and the Persians were skilled archers. Herodotus tells us that every Persian youth was taught three things —"to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth" (i. 136). At Persepolis, Medes and Persians are alike represented as carrying bows and quivers. Æschylus regards the contest between the Persians and the Greeks as one between the arrow and the spear ('Persæ,' ll. 135, 136).

Ver. 19.—**Babylon, the glory of kingdoms.** The "glory" of Babylon consisted: 1. In her antiquity. She had been the head of a great empire long before Assyria rose to power. 2. In her origination of literature, architecture, and the other arts, which all passed from her to Assyria, and thence to the other nations of Asia. 3. In her magnificence and the magnificence of her kings, which provoked the admiration of the Assyrians themselves ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 15). As time went on, she grew in wealth and splendour. Perhaps it was granted to Isaiah to see her in ecstatic vision, not merely such as she was in the time of Sargon under Merodach-Baladan, but such as she became under Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of her kings, who raised her to the highest pitch of glory and eminence. **The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency.** The Kaldi appear to have been originally one of the many tribes by which Babylonia was peopled at an early date. From the expression, "Ur of the Chaldees," which occurs more than once in Genesis (xi. 28, 31), we may gather that they were inhabitants of the more southern part of the country, near the coast. The same conclusion may be drawn from the Assyrian inscriptions, especially those of Shalmaneser II.—the Black Obelisk king. The term never became a general name for the Babylonian people among themselves or among the Assyrians; but, somehow or other, it was accepted in that sense by the Jews, and is so used, not only by Isaiah, but also by the writers of Kings and Chronicles, by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Habakkuk. **As when God overthrew Sodom.** Equally sudden and complete as that destruction.

Ver. 20.—**It shall never be inhabited.** This part of the prophecy did not receive its fulfilment till many centuries had gone by. From the time of Cyrus to that of Alexander the Great, Babylon was one of the chief cities of the Persian empire. Alexander was so struck with it, and with the excellence of its situation, that he designed to make it his capital. It first began seriously to decline under the Seleucidæ, who built Seleucia on the Tigris as a rival to it, and still further injured it by fixing the seat of government at Antioch. But it had still a large population in the first century after our era (Josephus, 'Ant. Jud.,' xviii. 9, § 8); and is mentioned as a place of some consequence in the time of Trajan (Dio Cass., lxviii. 27), and even in that of Severus (Dio Cass., lxxv. 9). But after this it went rapidly to decay. Under the Sassanians it disappears from sight; and when Benjamin of Tudela, in the twelfth century, visited the spot, there was nothing to be seen of the mighty city but those ruins of the Kasr, or palace, which still arrest the traveller's attention. The site had become, and has ever since remained, "without inhabitant." **Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there.** A superstitious feeling prevents the Arabs from encamping on the mounds of Babylon, which are believed to be the haunts of evil spirits (Rich, 'First Memoir on Babylon,' p. 67; Ker Porter, 'Travels,' vol. ii. p. 371). **Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.** The nitrous soil of the Babylonian mounds allows them to produce nothing but the coarsest and most unpalatable vegetation. The shepherds consequently do not feed their flocks on them.

Ver. 21.—**Wild beasts of the desert shall lie there.** It is not quite clear what particular wild beasts are intended. Those actually noted on the site of Babylon are lions, jackals, and porcupines. These some-

times make their lairs in the ruins (Rich, 'First Memoir,' p. 69; Ker Porter, 'Travels,' vol. ii. p. 342). **Doleful creatures**; in the original, *ôkhim*. What animal is meant we cannot say, as the word occurs only in this passage. Mr. Cheyne translates it by "hyænas." **Owls shall dwell there**; literally, *daughters of the owl* (as in Lev. xi. 16; Deut. xiv. 15; Job xxx. 29; Jer. l. 39; Micah i. 8; and *infra*, ch. xxxiv. 13; xliii. 20). Mr. Rich says, "In most of the cavities of the Babil Mound there are numbers of owls and bats." Sir A. Layard, "A large grey owl is found in great numbers, frequently in flocks of nearly a hundred, in the low shrubs among the ruins of Babylon" ('Nin. and Bab.,' p. 484, note). **Satyrs shall dance there.** The word translated "satyr" is, etymologically, "hairy one," and ordinarily means "a goat." Some have supposed "wild goats" to be here intended, but they are not found in Babylonia. The translation "satyr" is defended by many, who think Isaiah might draw upon current beliefs for some features of his description. Dr. Kay gives "baboons," since the Moko—a kind of baboon—is known in Babylonia.

Ver. 22.—**Wild beasts of the islands.** In the Hebrew, *iyyim*, which means "wailers" or "howlers," probably "jackals." The Revised Version gives "wolves." **In their desolate houses**; or, *in their castles* (Cheyne). **And dragons**; *i.e.* "serpents." These have not been observed recently; but one of our old travellers notes that "the lande of Babylone," in his day, "was fulle of dragons and grete serpentes, and dyverse other veneymouse bestes alle abouten" (Mandeville, quoted by Ker Porter, 'Travels,' vol. ii. p. 336). **Near to come.** About one hundred and eighty years elapsed between the utterance of this prophecy and the fall of Babylon—a short period in the lifetime of a nation.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*The fall of Babylon a type of the general punishment of the wicked.* Scripture deals with history altogether in the way of example. Whether the subject be Assyria, or Syria, or Egypt, or Babylon, or even the "peculiar people of God," the object is to teach men by the facts adduced what they have to expect themselves. In ch. x. Assyria, here Babylon, is held up as a warning to sinners. The absolute certainty that punishment will overtake them at God's hands is the main lesson taught; but, beyond this, something is also taught concerning the method and (so to speak) economy of the Divine punishments; as, for example, the following:—

I. THAT GOD PUNISHES BY MEANS OF INSTRUMENTS, WHICH ARE GENERALLY PERSONS. God has two sets of instruments—natural agents, such as storm, lightning, blight, pestilence, etc.; and intellectual and moral agents, or persons. It depends entirely on his own will whether he will employ agents of the one kind or of the other. In dispensing good to man he employs largely natural agents, "making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). But in punishing men he seems to make use, to a greater extent, of persons. Now he raises up a tyrannical and oppressive king, like Rameses II. or Nebuchadnezzar, to carry out his sentence of suffering; now he allows a democratic assembly to establish a reign of terror in a sinful land; anon he uses the arrows of savage hordes, or the guns and bayonets of disciplined hosts, to chastise an offending people. Once only has he ever used his power to strike with sudden death on a large scale, and even there he employed a spiritual agent; it was "the angel of the Lord," who "went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and fourscore and five thousand" (2 Kings xix. 35).

II. THAT THE INSTRUMENTS ARE FOR THE MOST PART QUITE UNCONSCIOUS THAT GOD IS USING THEM. We are told this distinctly of Assyria. "I will give him a charge . . . howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so" (ch. x. 6, 7). And it was, no doubt, equally true of Babylon. The "hammer of the whole earth" (Jer. l. 23) did not know that she was being used to "break in pieces the nations, and to destroy kingdoms" (Jer. li. 20). She too "meant not so," but was only seeking her own aggrandizement. Even the Medes and the Persians, though "called from a far country to execute God's counsel" (ch. xlvii. 11), were unconscious of their call—blind instruments in the hand of Jehovah, as much as if they had been an army of locusts. But this only shows the power of God the more, who can make not only good men serve him, but bad; not only angels, but devils.

III. THAT GOD'S PUNISHMENTS COME SUDDENLY AND TAKE MEN BY SURPRISE.

Neither Assyria nor Babylon had much warning of their fate. Each seemed well-nigh at the zenith of its power when the final blow came. "I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon," says Jehovah, "and *thou wast not aware*" (Jer. l. 24); and again we are told, "Babylon is *suddenly* fallen and destroyed" (Jer. li. 8). God's punishments are apt to come, even on individuals, suddenly. When a man says to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," then comes the sentence of God, "Thou fool, *this night* thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke xii. 19, 20). Job's example is an extreme one (Job i. 13—19); but modified instances of men crushed by quick blows of unexpected calamity are within every one's experience. Destruction comes upon God's enemies generally "at unawares" (Ps. xxxv. 8).

IV. THAT ON FINDING THEMSELVES THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT, MEN ARE FILLED WITH TERROR AND DESPONDENCY. The terror and despondency of the Babylonians are strongly marked in the descriptions both of Isaiah and Jeremiah; *e.g.* "Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrow shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another" (ch. xiii. 7, 8). "The land shall tremble and sorrow . . . The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight; they have remained in their holds . . . they became as women" (Jer. li. 29, 30). Some such feelings come upon all who are conscious that the hand of God is laid upon them, not for chastisement, but for punishment.

V. THAT DIVINE PUNISHMENTS SELDOM STOP AT THEIR IMMEDIATE OBJECTS, BUT PASS ON AND AFFECT OTHERS ALSO. Partly, this would seem to be inevitable from the interconnection of man with man, and of nation with nation; but partly, also, it appears to be the result of the Divine will, which is set on punishing sin, and wherever it finds sin must punish it. Let Israel have to be punished for certain sins, Judah will be found to have committed the same sins; Judah must therefore participate in the punishment. When God arises to judge one nation, he, in a certain sense, arises to judge the whole earth; there must be equity in his dealings. If he has punished Babylonia, and Egypt is as bad, he must punish Egypt; if Egypt is no worse than Ethiopia, he must punish Ethiopia. The sin of Sodom brought destruction on all the cities of the plain—that of the Canaanitish nations on them, and on many of their neighbours. A Jehoram provokes God by his idolatry, and is deservedly smitten (2 Kings ix. 24). An Ahaziah, far less guilty, but still guilty, shares his fate (2 Kings ix. 27). The punishment of Babylon led on to the punishment of the "world for its evil" (ch. xiii. 11), and to such a general depopulation of Western Asia as made a man more precious than the gold of Ophir (ch. xiii. 12).

VI. THAT DIVINE PUNISHMENTS ARE OFTEN COMPLETE AND FINAL. It was said of Assyria, "There is no healing of thy bruise" (Nah. iii. 19). And a similar finality attaches to most judgments upon nations. Babylonia, though she made some desperate efforts to throw off the Persian yoke, never recovered herself. Egypt, a few years later, sank finally under foreign dominion. The ten tribes lost their separate existence after their captivity, and became merged in Judah. Judah's nationality was obliterated by Titus. The history of the world is a history of nations whom God has punished for their sins by final destruction. And the punishment of individuals, too, is often final. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram "went down quick into hell" (Numb. xvi. 30). Uzzah was smitten with sudden death for touching the ark (2 Sam. vi. 7). Ananias and Sapphira fell dead for uttering lies (Acts v. 5, 10). The question of punishments in another world is not here at issue. What the example of Babylon teaches is, that God's punishments, so far as this world is concerned, are often final.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—22.—*Oracle concerning Babylon.* I. APPROACH OF THE WARRIORS OF JEHOVAH. On the bare mountain the banner is upraised, and with loud cry and commanding gesture of the hand a host of warriors is summoned from all sides. As in ver. 26, Jehovah is viewed by the poet as a mighty Battle-Leader, Lord of hosts. His voice is heard, "I have given commission to my anointed ones, have called my heroes

for my work of punishment, my proudly rejoicing ones!" And then a noise is heard in the mountains as of a great multitude, for Jehovah is mustering his forces from the remotest parts, and preparing with the weapons of his wrath to destroy the earth. A cry of terror will be heard through the land; men's hands will droop, their hearts will melt, for the day of judgment is near. Horror will be depicted on every face. The lightning, the fire that burns up the stubble (Joel ii. 6), will be flashed back, as it seems, from the amazed eyes. In prophetic thought every great epoch of calamity and ruin is a judgment, a "day of Jehovah." For wrath and clemency are the two opposite sides of the unity of his being and character. No spring-time is ushered in without storms; no epoch of fruitful manhood is gained without struggles, within or without; no mischief departs from society, no false power is overthrown, without violence. Well for us if, stayed by religious faith, we can see the day of Jehovah shown amidst the darkest times, and when nations are perplexed with fear of change to be able to say, "The Lord reigneth." If he is a living God, then his will must be felt in political change. Nothing good can pass away; only falsehood must be overthrown.

II. THE DAY OF JEHOVAH. Its description is borrowed: 1. *From the most fearful phenomena of nature.* The stars are hidden, the sunrise is overclouded, the light of the moon is withdrawn. A universal trembling seems to fill the air, while the earth would bound from its place. So close is the sympathy of the human spirit with nature, its dark or bright aspects seem to be the aspect of the God of nature in wrath or in kindness to man. 2. *From the most fearful scenes of war.* In a few bold lines the picture is struck out. Fugitives are seen flying in every direction, like frightened gazelles, or like a flock of sheep without its shepherd. Those overtaken are pierced by the spear, or struck down by the sword. Children at the breast are dashed to pieces, houses plundered, women outraged. More horrible is the spectacle of a battle-field than that of Nature in her wildest uproar. It is the opening of the hell in the heart of man. 3. *Its moral purpose defined.* There is, then, some light to be found even here. The God of justice and holiness is "searching home for evil on the face of the earth, and for the guilt of the unrighteous."

> "Ever and anon some bright white shaft
> Burned thro' the pine-tree roof—here burned and there,
> As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
> Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
> *Feeling for guilty thee and me.*"

The thought that God holds *inquisition* for evil and evil-doers is deeply stamped in Bible lore. There are heresies which he cannot and will not tolerate. They are not identical with what some call heresies. These are often departures from *our* fashions of life and of thought; but it is only disagreement with him and his law of inward right that is the condemnable dissent. Again, it is his object to bring down the pride and arrogance of the haughty. How deeply marked, again, is this thought of *overstepping* our proper limits as the essence of sin, from the Fall onwards! It is fixed in the word "transgression." The "lust to seem the thing we are not" is at the root of display, of ambition, of domineering over others. The prophets saw in the bloated dominion of great states like Egypt and Assyria the effects of these unbalanced lusts, which must sooner or later topple the tyrants into ruin. And thus the purpose of judgment resolves itself into that of *sifting* mankind—to make the people "rarer than fine gold, and men than Ophir's treasures." When ill weeds are cleared away, there is a chance for good plants to flourish; and when a mass of human evil has disappeared, room is made for something of another quality, to renew the tradition of the Divine in man.

III. THE FINAL DEVASTATION. (Vers. 17—22.) Here is a picture of the Medes—a horde of savages, who despise civilization, and who will pour in upon Babylon, as in later days Attila came with his hosts to tread on the necks of the Romans. The dread memory of the cities of the plain can alone furnish a parallel to what will be seen on the site of Babylon. Where now the sounds of luxury and mirth are heard in proud palaces, soon not a nomad tent will be pitched, nor a shepherd's fold; but only the cries of wild creatures will be heard, and satyrs hold their obscene dances. This magnificent picture of the overthrow of human greatness and pride springs, let us observe, from conscience. And none can study such pictures or visit the ruins of ancient cities

without a quickening of the pulse of conscience. Such glimpses as we can gain of ancient life in those proud cities of the Orient bear out the views of the prophet. It was a life which overpassed life's restrictions, and which ended in death. Mournful is the inscription on Sardanapalus's tomb, "Let us eat, drink, and love; for the rest is of little worth." We may learn the lesson that, when men so speak of life, they have abused it; and while we believe that there is a sacredness in human life and in the grand products of human life, this is only so as long as they reflect the purposes of God. Out of such scenes as those the prophet depicts, a solemn voice seems to speak, declaring that human life and glory are held cheap in comparison with those profound and, from us, half-hidden, half-revealed ends towards which the whole creation moves.—J.

Ver. 7.—*Mental depression.* "Faint." A common experience enough this. Some people pride themselves on the speciality of their experiences, just as they consider their physical ailments to be altogether peculiar and unique. Faint! Who amongst us does not understand that? Why, we do not know. Care is like the atmosphere; its pressure is enormous, but the thing itself is invisible. "Light as air," some say; but many temperaments could say, "heavy as air," which depresses all the nerve-functions of the body. Faint! We like to know not only that it is common, but that greatly heroic spiritual natures have felt it! Read at your leisure Luther's letter where he says of the evil one, "He lies closer to me than my Catharine," and where in one part of his diary he is so desolate and disheartened that he suggests, if God wishes the Reformation to go on, he must come and take it in hand himself. Faint! If busy men feel it, women feel it sometimes more—thinking about the children; having the worry of household management; finding it so dificult to preserve elevation of thought amid the cares of common life.

I. WE ARE FAINT IN OUR FAILURES TO REACH OUR OWN IDEAL OF THE DIVINE LIFE. Our ideals have been beautiful. They have charmed our meditation, inspired our purposes. I am not speaking of spiritual excitements or emotions. No, my friend! Rather quiet and meditative hours. When we verily and indeed feel that piety is more than safety, when we feel that we would not do without religion if we could, we are fulfilling all the noblest aspirations within us. And these have been noble. In gazing on the image of Christ we have desire to be conformed to that image. But our condition here, you say, is one in which we have to do with such mean things—it is such a battle to live at all! Mean things? No, my friend. Nothing is mean that Christ can shine through. We can dignify common life, or God would not have given us common life to dignify. Christian life is beautiful, but it is difficult. It is *detail* that casts down men and women too. When we read Stanley's last journey through the dark continent, we find a week's desolation is crowded into ten lines of print; but it must have been very wearisome sometimes, and now and then all seemed nearly over. Yet the motto was "Onward!" You may have an idea or two—but try and write a book. It is *completeness* that tries. You may have looked *at* the Christian life with æsthetic admiration. But now you are *in* it. God help you, as he will. Be diligent. Gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober. Hope to the end. The ideal *shall be* realized some day. Not destroyed. *You* will be without fault before the throne.

II. WE ARE FAINT IN RELATION TO THE MORAL STATE OF THE WORLD. Jesus wept over Jerusalem as he gazed on the city that was doomed, for its own denial and rejection of himself. We are not one whit nearer solving the mystery of moral evil. No one can give us the *why* of sin. Some of the Germans have tried hard at a philosophy of *that*, but have failed. It cannot be educational only, or we should never have the sense of *guilt*. But here it is, and we have it *in* ourselves. Even now sin exists, if it does not reign. And here it is around us everywhere. We have a mighty Saviour, and we want men to love him, to trust him. But they are often so besotted, so blinded, so hardened, that they prefer their slavery. What wonder we are faint-hearted! You tell us that Christ is the same in heaven that he was on earth—the same in all sensitive care and love and desire. Yes. And I believe that the world's sin grieves him still—pains him always. "Ye crucify the Son of God afresh" is not to be frittered away as a mere metaphor! What did Christ say after his ascension to the persecuting Saul? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" Not "My Church" merely. The Head felt

with the members. Faint! I spoke of great men just now. Did not Moses shatter the tables of the Law in sad and bitter disappointment? Did not Paul find fickleness in his converts? Did not the Judaizers hamper his work? Did not some of his companions desert him? Was not sin still mighty *within* him, as well as around him? But Christ, the Conqueror of sin and death, was his Lord. The Holy Ghost gave him inner might.

III. FAINT IN RELATION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF SORROW. We need it. But "no affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Faint! You may have left one at home who used to come and drink of the brook by the way at church, who is frail and ill now. You remember some who have had a dire discipline of trial through kith and kin, who have cast the crown of honour into the dust. You would not think much of them if they had not been cast down. Superficial people who say, "Make an effort!" "Cheer up!" only worry the nerves; they do not really ease trouble, because we cannot be "merry" with a heavy heart. You must lift up with a wise hope, a real trust, a child's confidence. "Show us the Father," then we *can* endure; then we can "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." But you say, "Faintness depresses us." Mind what you say, because you reveal *character*. It is just like saying, "Music must always be made for *me*; I won't be made sad; I won't enter an atmosphere of depression." Human hearts *cannot* always smile. Faint people must be in a world like this, but it will be only for a season; it will lead them to him who can raise up, who will lay beneath them his own everlasting arms, who will "not destroy." Never. "Chastened, but not destroyed"—tested, but not destroyed. At such times do not rest in "moods" or feelings, but look out of yourselves to Christ.

IV. WE ARE FAINT IN RELATION TO OUR INFLUENCE OVER OTHERS. We had hoped so much to send such bright rays over the dark sea from the lighthouse of our faith; to give the emerald beauty of a new spring to so many sterile places. We have not been such guides, such comforters, as we hoped to be. And the fault has been, not in lack of doing, but in want of *being*. To live has not been Christ. We have not been watchful enough either, against inimical forces in our fields. The Red Indians come when we are asleep or on a journey, and stamp out our corn. We are "faint" too because arrest will so soon be laid on our powers. But is it not right to rejoice that we have been able to do some good? Certainly. We have been unprofitable servants at the best, but it would be not only unreal, but wrong, to forget what God may have accomplished through us. Paul said, "Now thanks be unto God, which alway causeth us to triumph in Christ." We are not as the men of this world, cast down into the loss of joy and hope—and in despair. No, it is only for a season. We *are* Christ's. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*The burden of the Lord.* "The burden of Babylon" (see ch. xv. 1; xvii. 1; xix. 1, etc.). The use of the word "burden," to signify a message and its subsequent expansion into the phrase "the burden of the Lord" (see Jer. xxiii. 33), suggest to us—

I. THAT TO ALL MEN EVERYWHERE BELONGS THE SACRED DUTY OF CARRYING THE MESSAGES OF GOD. The term here used may simply signify this—the bearing of the Word of God to those for whom it was intended. This is a work which belongs to every filial son, to every faithful servant. Possessed of it ourselves, and experiencing its exceeding preciousness, we are to convey it to all who are in need of it. We *can all* carry to the souls of men "the will of God concerning them in Christ Jesus," his Divine desire that they should turn from all iniquity, should believe in his Son, their Saviour and Lord, and should follow him in every path of purity, integrity, love.

II. THAT ON SOME MEN THERE SOMETIMES DEVOLVES THE PAINFUL DUTY OF DELIVERING BURDENSOME MESSAGES FROM GOD. This was notably the case with the Hebrew prophets. They were frequently commissioned to convey unpleasant, unpalatable truths to men and nations, such as few cared to announce and none liked to receive; *e.g.* the message of Moses to Pharaoh, of Nathan to David, and of Elijah to Ahab; such, also, as these "burdens" to Babylon, Moab, Egypt. The faithful parent, teacher, minister, has often a message to make known which is a burden in this sense; it is that which is likely to weigh heavy on the heart of him that receives it; it is (1) the condem-

nation by the Righteous One of some form of sin and wrong; (2) it is the purpose of him who is the True One to visit persistent folly and impenitence with the marks of his Divine displeasure both in the body and in the spirit, both here and hereafter.

III. THAT ON THOSE IN WHOM IS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, SACRED TRUTH RESTS AS A BURDEN, from which they can only be delivered by faithful utterance. So was it with the Saviour himself (Luke xii. 50); and so with the prophets (Ps. xxxix. 3; Job xxxii. 18; Jer. xx. 9); and so with the apostles (1 Cor. ix. 16). So should it be with us. We ought to feel burdened with a sense of the sin and sorrow of the world, together with the fact that we have in our minds the knowledge of those truths which are divinely suited to destroy that sin and to disperse that sorrow. This is "the burden of the Lord," resting on the man in whom is much of the Spirit of Christ—a burden which will only be lifted from him when he has spoken his most earnest word and done his most devoted work, to teach, to heal, to save.—C.

Vers. 2—5.—*The kingdom of God.* These stirring, eloquent words of the prophet describing the gathering of the hosts at the summons of Jehovah speak to us of—

I. THE EXCEEDING BREADTH OF THE DIVINE CLAIM. All things, all nations, are Jehovah's; all these hosts that are to be gathered together are "*my* sanctified ones;" they are "my mighty ones." They did not know him, but, notwithstanding, God claims them as belonging to himself. He does claim all nations and peoples as his own; not only those who own their allegiance, but those also who are ignorant of his Name, and are worshippers at other shrines.

II. THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE. God has his purposes (1) regarding the various nations of the earth. He had a certain work for his own people, Israel, to accomplish. But his "wise designs" covered a far wider area than any Holy Land; they embraced Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, Media, Persia, Egypt, Rome, Greece, etc. He arranged for them a part to play in his great redemptive scheme. But though this large aspect is a true one, and Isaiah, in prophetic vision, heard the "noise of a multitude . . . like as of a great people, . . . a noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together," coming "from a far country," yet is it equally true, and it is a truth of at least equal value, that God has his purposes (2) respecting each humble individual life. The Christian minister has the right, without special vision, to declare to every man that God has a purpose to be fulfilled in his particular life, and that he is marshalling events and mustering "forces" in order that it may be carried out. It ought to raise our estimate of the sacredness and value of the life God has given us to live on the earth when we remember that "every man's life is a plan of God," and that by it he desires and designs to accomplish some especial end.

III. THE GREATNESS OF DIVINE POWER. 1. We understand that God has unlimited power over unresisting, inert matter. 2. We have a larger view of his omnipotence when we realize that he controls all sentient life, making every living creature to praise and serve him. 3. Our thought rises far higher as we consider how he is directing the activities of his obedient children, his voluntary servants, in all worlds. 4. We reach the largest and loftiest conception of Divine wisdom and power, in marvellous co-operation, when we dwell on his *overruling energy*. Jehovah so turns the selfish and ungodly projects of kings and armies to his own Divine account, that he can speak of Medes and Persians as "his sanctified ones," or as those set apart by him for this especial work; that he can represent them as "rejoicing in his highness" when they were eagerly bent on their own purposes; that he can designate them "the weapons of his indignation." (1) We little think how, under Divine interposition, we are contributing to one cause when we are absorbed in another. (2) How immeasurably preferable is the service which is voluntary and conscious to that which is involuntary and unconscious! It is only the former which gives pleasure to the Supreme, and which will secure approval and reward for the human worker.—C.

Ver. 6.—"*The day of the Lord.*" We may truly speak of every day as a "day of the Lord." For when does the morning come on which we cannot say, "This is the day which the Lord has made" (Ps. cxviii. 24)? Every day brings with it fresh tokens of his presence, new proofs of his power. The refreshment and invigoration of sleep, the provisions of the table, the enjoyment of the hearth, the activities of outward life, the

continuance of mental power, etc.,—do not all these daily mercies make each returning portion of our time a "day of the Lord"? But there is a peculiar sense in which the time of special visitation is to be so regarded. For that is the day on which—

I. GOD REVEALS HIS NEARNESS TO US AND HIS INTEREST IN US. We are in danger of imagining that God has withdrawn into a remote solitude, in which he takes no heed of the passing events of his outlying creation; that he is too great and high to concern himself with our "poor affairs." It is a conception unworthy of him and most injurious to us. When God "arises to judgment," so that it is as if all visible nature were disturbed and disordered (vers. 10, 13), and the hearts of men are filled with consternation (vers. 7, 8), "in the day of his fierce anger" (ver. 13), these false imaginings are scattered, and God is found and is felt to be a God at hand and not afar off—a God who has much to do with us, and with whom we have everything to do (Heb. iv. 13).

II. GOD REVEALS HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO US. Such events as these (vers. 9—11) are "terrible things *in righteousness*." The anger or "wrath" of the Lord (vers. 9, 13) is thus revealed "against all unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18). God is "destroying the sinners" (ver. 9) in order that he may set his seal against the sin which they have committed; he is humbling the proud that their "arrogancy may cease" (ver. 11), and that human haughtiness may receive his powerful condemnation. In such a "day" as this, the Lord is making his thought concerning iniquity very clear to the children of men.

III. GOD MANIFESTS HIS POWER TO US. Sin is apt to think itself triumphant; it is arrogant, haughty (ver. 11); it says, "Who is the Lord?" etc. (Exod. v. 2); it says, "How does God know?" (Ps. lxxiii. 11); it says, "Let us break asunder the bands of the Lord" (Ps. ii. 3). In "the day of the Lord," the nation, the confederacy, the individual man, sees that human bands are nothing but thinnest thread in the hands of almighty power. Then man knows his nothingness in the presence of his Maker; his spirit is subdued (ver. 8), and he acknowledges that God is greater than he (Dan. vi. 26).

IV. GOD ATTESTS HIS FAITHFULNESS AND HIS GOODNESS. God has given many promises to his people that he will appear some day on their behalf. Often his coming seems to be long delayed (Rev. vi. 10). But "in the day of the Lord" this his Divine word is redeemed; then the enslaved nation is freed from its bondage; then the persecuted Church is delivered from its oppressor; then the wronged family or the injured man is saved from the wrong-doer, and walks in peace and in prosperity. Hence the many utterances of thanksgiving for the "judgments" of the Lord. The outpouring of his wrath, which seems "cruel" (ver. 9) to the guilty, shows itself to his suffering people as the long-awaited proof of his fidelity to his word and pity for his people. 1. Let the afflicted wait in hope; their cause will be espoused, their prayers heard and answered. 2. Let the guilty tremble; the day of the Lord will come, a day of darkness and confusion, a day of terror and overthrow for them; even when they may be most confident of continuance in power and sin, the coming of God in judgment may be "at hand."—C.

Ver. 12.—*The price of a man.* The aim of the prophet is to show the extent of the disaster which, in the indignation of God (ver. 5), should overtake the guilty city. One feature of the ruin should be wholesale slaughter (ver. 15). And the result of this would be a terrible reduction of the male population. Men, usually so prevalent, so "cheap" in Babylon, should become scarce and precious; so precious should they be that it might be said, speaking figuratively, that a man would be more precious than gold, even than "the golden wedge of Ophir." What might thus be affirmed of man, in figurative language, in the day of God's wrath, shall become true of man, in simple fact and truth, in *the day of Divine grace.* Under Christ the day will come when the worth of a man shall be felt to be wholly irreducible to terms of gold and silver; that "no mention shall be made of pearls" when it is attempted to form an estimate of the value of a human spirit.

I. UNDER THE INFLUENCE AND DOMINION OF SIN WE HAVE SADLY LOWERED OUR ESTIMATE OF OURSELVES. 1. Men have *treated their fellows as nothing worth.* They have either treated their sufferings with callous indifference, or they have looked on

their neighbours as related in no other way than through the wages market; or they have actually bought and sold them—their sinews, their intelligence, their honour—for so much gold. 2. Men have *pitifully undervalued themselves.* They have acted as if they were nothing better than intelligent machines for making money, or than creatures capable of so much enjoyment, or than office-holders who might attain to certain dignities for a few passing years.

II. UNDER CHRIST THE VALUE OF A HUMAN BEING HAS BEEN IMMEASURABLY RAISED. Jesus Christ by his teaching (see especially Mark viii. 36, 37), by the illustration in his own person of what a Son of man can be, by the great purpose of his life and death, has lifted up to an altogether different level our conception of mankind. Now, we know: 1. That God made every man for himself—for his favour, his friendship, his likeness, his service. 2. That God is earnestly desirous that every child of his, however far he may have wandered from his side, should return to the Father's home (Luke xv.). 3. That for every child of man a Divine Saviour suffered and died (Heb. ii. 9). 4. That before every man who will accept Jesus Christ as his Redeemer there is a holy life on earth and a blissful, glorious immortality. Instructed, inspired by these high truths, we have come, or are coming, to look on every human spirit as possessed of a value which money does not in any degree represent, which cannot be told in "golden wedges." It behoves us all (1) to recognize our own individual worth, and to act on that true Christian estimate; (2) to recognize in every one around us, into whatsoever depths of evil he or she may have fallen, one who may be reclaimed and restored, and who may become inexpressibly dear to the Father and Saviour of men.—C.

Vers. 19—22.—*The overthrow of evil.* The minuteness of detail with which this prophecy has been fulfilled goes far to prove that holy men of old *did* speak "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The prediction is profoundly interesting in this light; it is also instructive as foretelling the entire extinction of a world-power which, at the hour of utterance, appeared to rest on immovable foundations. There are great powers—national, ecclesiastical, dynastic, institutional, social—which are as Babylon in Isaiah's time, and which need to be extinguished for the happiness and well-being of the race. Respecting the overthrow of evil, we see—

I. ITS APPARENT IMPOSSIBILITY OR DISHEARTENING DISTANCE. How utterly impossible, or at least how hopelessly remote, must the day of Babylon's overthrow have seemed to the Jews in the time of the prophet! To those of a scoffing spirit, or to the constitutionally incredulous or despondent, the words of Isaiah doubtless seemed visionary, if not altogether wild and vain. So vain may seem to us now the hopes which are held out of the fall and ultimate extinction of existing evils—the despotic empire; the usurping and corrupt Church; the huge, wasteful, war-inciting military and naval organizations; strongly entrenched social habits which dishonour and enfeeble the community; venerable systems of erroneous belief which have lasted for centuries and deluded millions of minds, etc. It seems to us desirable, beyond all reckoning, that these things should receive their death-blow, and should be numbered among the things of the past. But how can we venture to expect their defeat and their disappearance? All strong things are in their favour; the majority of mankind favour them; pecuniary interests, deep-rooted habits, social customs, inveterate prejudices, powerful societies, are sustaining them. How hopeless it seems that powers so fortified can be successfully assailed and absolutely demolished!

II. ITS ARRIVAL IN DUE COURSE. Babylon did fall; it was taken and re-taken and taken again, and finally deserted, until it became what is here foretold. Every evil thing shall share its fate. Everything which exalts itself against God, everything which is hostile to the truth, everything which is actually harmful to mankind, shall one day be defeated and destroyed. As the little living seeds dropped into the crack of the huge temple become the upspringing plants which push their way through the strong masonry and at length overturn the tall columns and the massive walls and lay the whole structure on the ground; so the seed of Divine truth, inserted in the temple of error, of vice, of tyranny, of idolatry, of iniquity, shall spring and grow, and thrust and overturn, until the frowning walls have fallen and the structure of sin is a harmless ruin. The great Babylon of sin itself shall one day lie waste and have no inhabitant.

III. ITS MORAL. 1. *It is a wretched thing to be on the side of wrong.* First and most of all, because it *is* the wrong side we are espousing, and it ought to be an insufferable thing to us that we are thinking, speaking, working on behalf of that which is evil in the sight of God and hurtful to the truer interests of man. But also because we are certain to be defeated in the end. 2. *It is a blessed thing to be engaged on the side of righteousness.* First and most, because it *is* the cause of God, of man, of truth, on which we are leagued; and also because we are sure to win at last. The wise and the good may meet with many a check, but they will gain the victory; the unholy and the evil-minded may snatch many an advantage, but the end shall be a miserable disaster, an utter overthrow, a dragon-haunted desert. Let us see to it that we are fighting on God's side, and, once sure that we are, let us strike our blow for truth and wisdom, confident that, however strong and high stand the towers of sin, its citadel *will* be taken, its day *will* descend into darkness, its million-peopled streets become a doleful desert.—C.

Ver. 3.—*The Lord's sanctified ones.* This term is used of an army, regarded as being consecrated by the sacrifices which were offered at the beginning of the campaign (comp. 2 Sam. xiii. 9). The assertion made by the prophet is that the Persian army was not really consecrated to Ahura-Mazda, but to Jehovah. Whatever might *seem* to be the fact, the fact really was that the Persians would fulfil Jehovah's will and carry out Jehovah's judgments. A "sanctified one" is, properly, one separated from self-interests and from other people's concerns, in order that he might carry out God's will. "Set apart by the purposes and providence of God, disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to something God would have done: such as were qualified for that to which they were called, for what God employs men in, he does in some measure fit them for." We learn from this expression, and its connection, that we too may be set apart for God, we may be the Lord's sanctified ones; and yet, on the one hand, the fact may be unrecognized, or, on the other, the fact may bring to us impulse and honour and the unspeakable joy of service.

I. SET APART FOR GOD WITHOUT OUR KNOWING IT. As of Cyrus, the Lord's anointed, it is said, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." But in this case there can be no proper rewards, since the will of the man is not in harmony with the Divine will. God may use his creature man, just as he uses clouds and winds and waves, to fulfil his purposes, and there is no more to be said about it. We are the Lord's tools, his rod, his staff. Willingly or unwillingly man must do the Lord's bidding.

II. SET APART FOR GOD WITH OUR OWN GLAD CONSENT. Then we come into the position of willing, loving servants; and then there can be rewards which take three forms. Such willingly sanctified ones (1) are honoured with yet further and higher trusts; (2) are personally cultured by the doing of their life-work under such conditions; and (3) are sure to receive, now in their hearts, and by-and-by in some open manner, the Master's "Well done, good and faithful servants," the smile and the word of gracious approval. And such rewards are altogether independent of the particular character of the work for which we are set apart. It may be most trying and painful work, even work of judgment or retribution. No matter; the Divine recognition is ever of willingness and faithfulness. God rewards the true man, not the particular form the man's service must take.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—"*The day of the Lord.*" This expression is employed for that crisis in the history of the world when Jehovah will interpose to correct the evils of the present. Such great crises are called "days" in antithesis to the ages of Divine long-suffering. In Christian thought the term is associated with the coming day or time of judgment, and mainly with that in view we dwell on the words. Isaiah was one of a class of prophets to whom God disclosed, in visions, the scenes of the ever-nearing future. Maybe in the quietness of their homes, as they meditated on the condition of the world, and the purposes of God concerning men, they were rapt in vision, and, with various degrees of dimness or of clearness, they saw pass before their entranced view, now the scenes of battle and bloodshed, now the scenes of famine and pestilence; now they beheld the desolation of those nations that oppressed their own people—Nineveh and Babylon buried out of sight, Tyre a place for the fisher's nets; and now they

seemed to hear the wild shout of the foes of Israel, as they burst through into the sacred city; and soon, in smoke and flames, they watched her very temple perish. And yet again, in dimmer lines, as though further on in the march of ages, they seemed to see the last great scene of human history—a world arraigned, the thrones set, the books opened. These visions often prostrated those prophets in the intensity of excitement; but they were given to them that they might set them on record, for the sake of their own people and the whole Church of the redeemed, that we all might learn to live in the view of that future, with the infallible decisions of the future ever in our thought, and reminding us that "he which soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." There is much that is most solemnizing in the expression, "the day of the Lord," if we read it from the Christian standpoint, and see it to mean the day of the Lord Jesus.

I. OUR LORD HAS HAD: 1. His day of humiliation, when he stepped down from his heavenly throne, laid aside "his most Divine array," and entered our world as the poor man's babe, born in a stable, laid in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. 2. He has had many a day of toil, and patience, and pleading, and prayer among men. Year after year he tarried in the flesh, proving his Divine power to save, and winning men to himself by the tender sacrificings of his love. 3. He has had a day of suffering and anguish for men. "Behold, and see if there ever was sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted him" for our sakes. 4. He has had many a day of inviting grace, when, in the power of his Spirit, he has called us to yield ourselves unto him; when, in the leadings of his providence and the ministry of his Word, he has cried, "My son, give me thy heart;" "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest." He has had many a day of patience, of waiting, of long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

II. BUT THE DAY OF THE LORD, THE DAY OF DAYS, IS YET TO COME. 1. The day of the Lord's glory, when the multitudes of the redeemed shall crown him with many crowns—shall crown him Lord of all. 2. The day of the Lord's vindication, when he shall break down the rebellion of lost souls with the proofs of his forbearance and the memory of his repeated calls. 3. The day when the "wrath of the Lamb" must be revealed, and he shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of his Son. There must be an end of this dispensation of redemption, there must be a closing up of it; there must be the "day of the Lord." For us all that day cometh as a thief in the night.

III. THE DECISIONS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. The Scriptures do not satisfy our questionings upon the terms of decision on that day. So far as we can gather, there will be a general term, and a more particular one. The more general term may be thus expressed: "No condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "Condemned already," because ye believe not on the Son of God. The more particular term is thus expressed: "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." How these are to fit into each other it is beyond any human power to explain, because the Bible does not afford us the means of explanation. We can, however, settle two separate facts very clearly. Our life, in its minutest acts, carries eternal issues. Everything we do, beyond its bearing on our present character, has its bearing on our eternal destiny, because on our eternal character. And we are tested by our relation to Christ. The test of the great coming day is first this—In Christ, or out of Christ. The answer to that settles all else—whether you shall be in the fold or out of it, in the everlasting peace or out of it, in heaven or out of it.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*God as El Shaddai.* It will at once come to mind that this is the name used for God by John Bunyan in his 'Holy War,' but it is an unfamiliar one, and one that needs explanation. It is translated in Scripture by the term "the Almighty," but that properly represents the Hebrew *El Gibbôr*. Cheyne says, "Wherever it occurs (Joel i. 15; Ezek. i. 24; x. 5), it appears to express the more severe and awful side of the Divine nature. Though used as a mere synonym for El, or Elohim, it must at least be clear that force, and specially force as exhibited in a dangerous aspect in some natural phenomena, is the original meaning of the word, a meaning suitable enough to the earliest stage of biblical religion (see Exod. vi. 3)." Gesenius thinks that, originally,

before it was adopted into biblical religion, Shaddai meant, "God the Sender of storms." The connection of this physical figure with the term "Almighty" is very plain, for the Controller of the heavenly forces can surely do everything: the greater implies the less, and the great of which we know is so great that the mastery of it assures to us that there must be ability to master what we do not know.

I. THE TERM "MOST MIGHTY" AS APPLIED TO EARTHLY KINGS. It is quite the usual form in which the worth-ship of subjects is presented, and it was especially used of the monarchs of vast Eastern kingdoms, who ruled by an absolute authority. It was not, however, a mere high-sounding title; it gathered up the very various sides of kingly greatness, and put them into a single term. We may illustrate how it found expression for (1) supreme rank, (2) exalted dignity, (3) vast extent of dominion, (4) ready and hearty allegiance of subjects, (5) strength of forces, (6) and absoluteness of will. It may also have embraced administration of august character.

II. THE TERM "ALL-MIGHTY" AS APPLIED TO THE KING OF KINGS. The term "almighty" rises above "most mighty," and can be truly applied to God alone. The above divisions may be taken, in which great earthly kings are said to be "most mighty," and, as applied to God, they may help us to realize the senses in which he is "all-mighty." And occasion may be made for urging the *reverence* which is due to him; the awe he claims, which should make "all the earth keep silence before him." It may be well also to meet the difficulty, that God cannot do absolutely everything, by showing that he can do everything which is not, under the conditions of human thought, *absurd in the statement*, such as make two straight lines enclose a space, or two and two count five.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The preciousness of man.* Matthew Henry gives very clearly the first ideas and associations of the passage. "There shall be so great a slaughter as will produce a scarcity of men. You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be enlisted in the army, not a man to match a daughter to, for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one." Such a comparison of man with gold would only be suggested to persons familiar with the sale and purchase of slaves. The irony, or satire, in the comparison lies in the over-estimate of gold in a luxurious age. It is a sad sign for any nation when its "gold of Ophir" is valued more than its men. The second clause having the more general term "human being," we are reminded that it is man as man, and not man in view of his learning, position, manners, or wealth, that the prophet regards as of incomparable value. The position of Ophir is disputed, but J. A. Alexander points out that "whether the place meant be Ceylon, or some part of continental India, or of Arabia, or of Africa, it is here named simply as an Eldorado, as a place where gold abounded, either as a native product or an article of commerce." The older idea of the word rendered "precious" was *making dear or costly*; the modern idea is *making rare or scarce*. The expression may fittingly introduce the general topic of the value of men, for only in view of their value can their scarcity be treated as a matter of anxiety. That value may be set forth as to be recognized—

I. IN HIS MORAL NATURE. He differs essentially from the material and animal creations. Not in possession of mind, but in capacity to apprehend the distinction between right and wrong, and in power to will the right and refuse the wrong. This is what we mean by a moral nature. The animal may decide its action upon some sort of consideration of the consequences, pleasurable or painful, that may attend on its conduct. Man does not merely act in view of consequences; he estimates the character of the action, judging it in the light of what he apprehends of God, as, to him, the ideal of righteousness. As a moral being, then, man transcends all creatures, and there can be no possible comparison of him with any material thing, even the finest gold of Ophir. This moral nature belongs to all men everywhere, and cannot be overlaid, or crushed wholly out, by any poverty, ignorance, or debasement of vice. The man is always a man, and to his moral nature God, and his fellow moral beings, may always hopefully appeal.

II. IN HIS POSSIBILITIES FOR GOOD OR EVIL. He must be a precious being who can rise to be as saintly as some have become, and can sink to be as Satanic as others have become. Dr. Horace Bushnell has a fine sermon in 'New Life,' p. 16, entitled, "The

Dignity of Human Nature shown from its Ruins." After speaking of many who "magnify the dignity of human nature, by tracing its capabilities, and the tokens it reveals of a natural affinity with God and truth. They distinguish lovely instincts, powers, and properties allied to God, aspirations reaching after God," he undertakes to "show the essential greatness and dignity of man from the ruin itself which he becomes;" and then he says, "Nor is it anything new, or a turn more ingenious than just, that we undertake to raise our conceptions of human nature in this manner, for it is in just this way that we are accustomed to get our measures and form our conceptions of many things; of the power, for example, of ancient dynasties, and the magnificence of ancient works and cities, such, for example, as Egypt, Rome, Thebes, Karnac, Luxor, or Nineveh. So it is with man. Our most veritable, though saddest, impressions of his greatness, as a creature, we shall derive from the magnificent ruin he displayed. In that ruin we shall distinguish fallen powers that lie as broken pillars on the ground; temples of beauty, whose scarred and shattered walls still indicate their ancient, original glory; summits covered with broken stones, infested by asps, where the palaces of high thought and great aspiration stood, and righteous courage went up to maintain the citadel of the mind—all a ruin now—archangel ruined." We estimate the value of raw material by "what can be made of it." On that condition man is seen to be more precious than aught else; he may be changed into the Divine image, from glory to glory.

III. IN HIS IMMORTALITY. Man's natural immortality is gravely disputed in these days, but an opinion on that difficult subject is not necessary in the treatment of this subject from our present point of view. It is *possible* for man to become immortal, and that stamps his incomparable value. Continuity is a common sign of value; but, further than that, the being who can be immortal must have capacity for immortal spheres. In conclusion, it may be shown that the preciousness of man, or the sanctity of human life, is the foundation of social order, and the inspiration of human brotherhood and self-denial.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The fall of pride.* The type of pride, in Scripture, is Babylon; to the grandeur of it the Chaldees pointed in self-admiring triumph. "The words of this text paint the impression which the great city, even in Isaiah's time, made upon all who saw it. So Nebuchadnezzar, though his work was mainly that of a restorer, exulted in his pride in the greatness of the city of which he claimed to be the builder (Dan. iv. 30). So Herodotus describes it as the most famous and strongest of all the cities of Assyria, adorned beyond any other city on which his eyes had ever looked." God's dealings with nations are illustrations, in the large, of his dealings with families and individuals. The evil recognized as characteristic of a nation may be equally characteristic of a family and of an individual, on whom, therefore, the appropriate Divine judgments will be sure to fall. Nations stand forth prominently in the world's eye, and keep their lessons in history for the instruction of all the ages. This may be illustrated from the Babylonian kingdom of the ancient days, and from Napoleonic France of modern times. The following points will readily suggest illustration from history, and from the circle of our actual experience.

I. PRIDE OF CONQUEST HAS NEVER PROVED LASTING. See the stories of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Tamerlane, Charlemagne, Buonaparte, and others. It is equally true of cases of private acquisition. The man who grasps his neighbour's property, and joins field to field, has to learn that God hateth the proud. The riches gathered fly away, or the son that follows him squanders it all.

II. PRIDE OF SOCIAL GRANDEUR HAS NEVER PROVED LASTING. Beckford thought to outrival all country mansions with his Fonthill Abbey, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Grant thought to build a palace in the west of London, grander than all around him, and it has passed under the hammer of the auctioneer.

III. PRIDE OF COMMERCIAL PROSPERITY HAS NEVER PROVED LASTING. Venice and Genoa and the Holland ports illustrate this. God's providence brings round the judgment when the pride has become overwhelming. God holds a limit beyond which he never permits a nation, a family, or an individual to go. As soon as pride begins to take the honour due to God, stability is over, our foundations begin to shift, and the night of the first wild storm all that we have raised so anxiously lies about us in ruins. There is a day of God always near at hand for the proud.—R. T.

Vers. 21, 22.—*Literal fulfilment of prophecy.* The language of modern travellers illustrates the fulfilment of the prediction. Layard says, "Owls start from the scanty thickets, and the foul jackal stalks among the furrows." "It is a naked and hideous waste." Dr. Plumptre says, "The work was, however, accompanied by slow degrees, and was not, like the destruction of Nineveh, the result of a single overthrow. Darius dismantled its walls, Xerxes pulled down the temple of Belus. Alexander contemplated its restoration, but his designs were frustrated by his early death. Susa and Ecbatana, Seleucia and Antioch, Ctesiphon and Bagdad, became successively the centres of commerce and of government." By the time of Strabo (B.C. 20) the work was accomplished, and the "vast city" had become a "vast desolation." In illustrating the literal fulfilment of this prophecy, the dean further says, "The Bedouins themselves, partly because the place is desolate, partly from a superstitious horror, shrink from encamping on the sites of the ancient temples and palaces, and they are left to lions, and other beasts of prey. On the other hand, Joseph Wolff, the missionary, describes a strange weird scene—pilgrims of the Yezidis, or devil-worshippers, dancing and howling like dervishes amid the ruins of Babylon." It is interesting to note the following passage from the 'Itinerary' of Benjamin Bar-jona, given by Matthew Henry. "This is that Babel which was of old thirty miles in breadth; it is now laid waste. There are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter in, for fear of serpents and scorpions, which possess the place." For further indications of the precision of fulfilment, encyclopædias and books of Eastern travel should be studied. We point out here that prophecy is usually poetic, and, rather, vaguely descriptive and suggestive, than precise or minute. Sometimes, however, for the verifying of all prophecies, some portions are made precise, and are literally fulfilled, as in the case of Babylon; and the two following points may be usefully illustrated:—

I. LITERAL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY CONFIRMING THE DIVINE WORD.

II. GENERAL FULFILMENTS THEREBY SHOWN TO BE EQUALLY CONFIRMATORY. When once the principle is established, we are freed from all bondage to demands for exact and minute agreements, and can freely read Scripture prophecy as full of poetical figure and imagery.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Vers. 1—23.—THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND HER SONG OF TRIUMPH OVER BABYLON. The destruction of Babylon is to be followed by the restoration of Israel, with the good will of the nations, and by their exercising rule over their late oppressors (vers. 1, 2). In this time of rest and refreshment they will sing a song of triumph over Babylon. The song extends from ver. 4 to ver. 23. It consists of five stanzas, or strophes, each comprising seven long lines, after which there is a brief epode, or epilogue, of a different character. This epode is comprised in vers. 22 and 23.

Ver. 1.—**For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob.** God's purpose of mercy upon Israel requires, as its preliminary, the destruction of Babylon, and may be considered as the final cause of that destruction. His desire to have mercy on Israel *soon* is the reason why the days of Babylon are not prolonged (see ch. xiii. 22). **Will yet choose Israel.** The Captivity was a rejection of Israel from their position as a favoured race—God's peculiar people; their restoration was a fresh "choice" of them out of all the nations of the world, a free act of grace on his part, to which they had no claim or right whatsoever. **And set them in their own land;** or, *on their own ground.* The land that once was theirs, but which they had forfeited by their disobedience, could only become "their own" again by a fresh gift from God. **The strangers shall be joined with them;** rather, *the stranger shall join himself to them.* On the return from the Captivity, there would be an influx of proselytes from the nations, who would voluntarily join themselves to those whom they saw favoured both by God and man (comp. Esth. viii. 17). Though the Jews did not commonly seek proselytes, they readily received such as offered themselves. A further fulfilment of the prophecy took place when the Gentiles flocked into the Church of God after the coming of Christ.

Ver. 2.—**And the people shall take them;** rather, *peoples shall take them.* The heathen nations among whom they have dwelt shall rejoice at the restoration of Israel to their own land, and even escort them in a friendly spirit to their borders (comp. Ezra i. 4, 6;

Neh. ii. 7—9). Some shall go so far as voluntarily to become their bondservants in Palestine. **They shall take them captive, whose captives they were.** This can scarcely have been intended literally. The Jews were at no time a conquering people, nor one that set itself to "take captives." The true meaning is that Jewish ideas shall penetrate and subdue the nations generally, and among them those with whom Israel had dwelt as captives. The Jews did become very powerful and numerous both in Assyria and Babylonia about the first century after Christ, and Christian Churches were early formed in Mesopotamia, Adiabene, and even Babylon.

Ver. 3.—**The hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve** (comp. ch. xlvii. 6). We have no detailed account of the Babylonian, as we have of the Egyptian, servitude; but it was probably well-nigh as grievous. A few, of royal descent, might be eunuchs in the palace of the great king (2 Kings xx. 18; Dan. i. 3), and hold offices of trust; but with the bulk of the nation it was otherwise. Ps. cxxxvii. has the plaintive ring which marks it as the utterance of a sorely oppressed people. And there are passages of Ezekiel which point in the same direction (see especially xxxiv. 27—29).

Ver. 4.—**Thou shalt take up this proverb**; rather, *this parable*, as the word is translated in Numb. xxiii. and xxiv.; in Job xxvi. 1; xxix. 1; Ps. xlix. 4; lxxviii. 2; Ezek. xvii. 2; xx. 49; xxi. 5; xxiv. 3; Micah ii. 4; Hab. ii. 6; or "this taunting speech," as our translators render in the margin (see Cheyne, *ad loc.*; and comp. Hab. ii. 6). **The golden city.** There are two readings here—*madhēbah* and *marhēbah*. The latter reading was preferred anciently, and is followed by the LXX., the Syriac and Chaldee Versions, the Targums, Ewald, Gesenius, and Mr. Cheyne. It would give the meaning of "the raging one." *Madhēbah*, however, is preferred by Rosenmüller, Vitringa, and Dr. Kay. It is supposed to mean "golden," from *d'hab*, the Chaldee form of the Hebrew *zahab*, gold. But the question is pertinent—Why should a Chaldee form have been used by a Hebrew writer ignorant of Chaldee and Chaldea?

Ver. 5.—**The staff . . . the sceptre.** Symbols of Babylonian power (comp. ch. x. 5).

Ver. 6.—**He who smote the people**; rather, *which smote the peoples*. The participle translated "he who smote" refers to "staff" or "sceptre." **With a continual stroke**; *i.e.* incessantly, one war following another without pause or stop. **He that ruled**, etc.; rather, *which ruled the nations in anger with a persecution that held not back.*

Ver. 7.—**At rest . . . singing.** The first result of the fall of Babylon is general peace, rest, and quiet; then the nations, recognizing the blessedness of the change, burst out into a song of rejoicing. The peace did not really continue very long; for Persia took up the *rôle* of conqueror which Babylon had been forced to drop, and, under Cambyses and Darius Hystaspis, produced as much stir and disturbance as had been caused by Babylon. Still, there was an interval of about eleven years between the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (B.C. 538), and the expedition by Cambyses against Egypt (B.C. 527).

Ver. 8.—**Fir trees . . . cedars.** We may detect a double meaning here—one literal, the other metaphorical. Literally, the trees of Lebanon and the other mountain ranges would be spared, since, while both the Assyrian and Babylonian kings cut timber in the Syrian forests for building purposes, the Persians had no such practice; metaphorically, the firs and cedars are the kings and nobles of the countries (comp. Ezek. xxxi. 16), who likewise had a respite. **Since thou art laid down**; rather, *since thou liest low.* The first stanza here ends, and the second begins with the next verse.

Ver. 9.—**Hell from beneath.** The Hebrew *Sheôl* corresponded nearly to the Greek Hades, and the Latin *Inferi*. It was a dismal region in the centre of the earth, whither departed souls descended, and where they remained thenceforth. There were various depths in it, each apparently more dismal than the preceding; but there is no evidence that it was considered to contain any place of happiness, until after the return from the Captivity. The prophet here represents *Sheôl* as disturbed by the advent of the Babylonian monarch, and as rousing itself to receive him. The great ones of the earth, and the kings, who are kings even in Hades, and sit upon thrones, are especially moved by the occasion, and prepare to meet and greet their brother. Personal identity and continued consciousness of it after death are assumed; and the former earthly rank of the inmates seems to be recognized and maintained. **It stirreth up the dead.** Hell in the aggregate—the place personified—proceeds to arouse the individual inmates, who are called *rephaim*—the word commonly translated "giants" (Deut. ii. 11, 20; xiii. 12; Josh. xii. 4; xiii. 12, etc.), but meaning properly "feeble ones." The shades or ghosts of the departed were regarded as weak and nerveless, in comparison with living men (compare the Homeric εἴδωλα καμόντων). **All the chief ones**; literally, *the he-goats* (comp. Jer. l. 8; li. 40; Zech. x. 3). **Raised up from their thrones**; *i.e.* "caused to rise up from their thrones," and stand in eager expectation of what was about to happen.

Ver. 10.—**Art thou also become weak as**

we! rather, *So thou also art made weak as we!* (On the supposed weakness of the dead, see the comment on ver. 9.)

Ver. 11.—**The noise of thy viols.** (On the fondness of the Babylonians for music, and the number and variety of their musical instruments, see Dan. iii. 7, 10, etc.) The word here translated "viol" is more commonly rendered "psaltery." (On the probable character of the instrument intended, see note on ch. v. 12.) **The worm is spread under thee,** etc.; rather, *beneath thee is spread the maggot, and the worm covereth thee.* The thought of the grave brings the thought of corruption with it. For cushion and for coverlet the royal corpse has only the loathsome creatures which come with putrescence. At this point the second stanza terminates.

Ver. 12.—**How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer!** Babylon's sudden fall is compared, with great force and beauty, to the (seeming) fall of a star from heaven. The word translated "Lucifer" means properly "shining one," and no doubt here designates a star; but whether any particular star or no is uncertain. The LXX. translated by ἑωσφόρος, whence our "Lucifer." The subjoined epithet, "son of the morning" or "of the dawn," accords well with this rendering. **How art thou cut down to the ground!** One of Isaiah's favourite changes of metaphor. It is a favourite metaphor also to which he reverts—that of representing the destruction of a nation by the felling of a tree or of a forest (comp. ch. ii. 12, 13; x. 33, 34, etc.). **Which didst weaken the nations;** rather, *which didst prostrate the nations.* The word used is one of great force (comp. Exod. xvii. 13; Job xiv. 10).

Ver. 13.—**For thou hast said;** rather, *and thou — thou saidst;* i.e. weak as thou art now shown to have been, it was thou that didst dare to say. **I will ascend into heaven,** etc. (comp. ch. x. 13, 14; xxxvii. 24, 25). Isaiah represents rather the thoughts of the Babylonian monarch than his actual words. The Babylonian inscriptions are full of boasting egotism; but they do not contain anything approaching to impiety. Tho king may regard himself as, in a certain sense, Divine; but still he entertains a deep respect and reverence for those gods whom he regards as the most exalted, as Merodach, Bel, Nebo, Sin, Shamas. He is their worshipper, their devotee, their suppliant (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. v. pp. 111—148). The Babylonian monarchs may have believed that after death they would mount up to heaven and join the "assembly of the great gods" (ibid., vol. iii. p. 83); but we scarcely know enough as yet of the religious opinions of the Babylonians to state positively what their belief was on the subject of a future life. **I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation.** The early commentators explained this of Mount Zion, especially on account of the phrase, "in the sides of the north," which is used of the temple-hill in Ps. xlviii. 2. But it is well objected that Mount Zion was a place of no grandeur or dignity or holiness to the Babylonians, who had made it a desolation; and that no Babylonian monarch would have desired to "sit" there. Moreover, the "mountain" of this passage must be one which is "above the heights of the clouds" and "above the stars of God," which the most imaginative poet could not have said of Mount Zion. A mythic mountain, belonging to the Babylonian theosophy, was therefore seen to be intended, even before the times of cuneiform decipherment (Rosenmüller, Michaelis, Knobel). Now that the Babylonian inscriptions can be read, it is found that there was such a mountain, called "Im-Kharsak," or "Kharsak-Kurra," which is described as "the mighty mountain of Bel, *whose head rivals heaven,* whose root is the holy deep," and which "was regarded as the spot where the ark had rested, and where the gods had their seat" ('Records of the Past,' vol. xi. p. 131, with the comment of Mr. Sayce, p. 130). In Babylonian geography this mountain was identified, either with the peak of Rowandiz, or with Mount Elwend, near Ecbatana. **In the sides of the north.** Both Elwend and Rowandiz are situated to the north-east of Babylon—a position which, according to ancient ideas, might be described indifferently as "north" or "east."

Ver. 14.—**I will be like the Most High** (comp. ch. xlvii. 8). It is a mistake to say that "the Assyrians gave the name of God to their monarchs" (Kay), or, at any rate, there is no evidence that they did. Nor does any king, either Assyrian or Babylonian, ever assume a Divine title. There is a marked difference in this respect between the Egyptian and the Assyro-Babylonian religious. Probably Isaiah only means that Babylonian monarchs *thought* of themselves as gods, worked their own wills, were wrapped up in themselves, did not in heart bow down to a higher Power.

Ver. 15.—**Thou shalt be brought down;** rather, *thou art brought down* (comp. vers. 9—11). **The sides of the pit;** or, *the recesses* —the "lowest parts" of the pit. With these words the third stanza terminates.

Ver. 16.—**They that see thee.** Dr. Kay well observes that "here the scene of the parable is changed back to earth. The corpse of the mighty conqueror is lying unburied." **Shall narrowly look upon thee.** Like the inhabitants of hell (ver. 10), those of earth also shall scarcely believe their eyes. They shall look close to see if it is indeed the great king that is slain.

Ver. 17.—That **opened not the house of his prisoners**; literally, *that loosed not his prisoners homewards*. The long imprisonment of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar (thirty-six years, 2 Kings xxv. 27) is an illustration; but perhaps it is rather the retention in captivity of the entire Jewish people that is brought to the prophet's cognizance.

Ver. 18.—**All the kings of the nations**, etc.; *i.e.* the other kings, speaking generally, died in peace, and had an honourable burial, each one in the sepulchre that he had prepared for himself as his final abode or "house" (comp. ch. xxii. 16). The care taken to prepare tombs was not confined to Egypt, though there obtaining its greatest development. Among others, the Persian kings certainly prepared their own sepulchres; and probably the practice was general.

Ver. 19.—**But thou art cast out** (see ver. 13). Again "thou" is emphatic. Translate, *But thou—thou art cast out*. The Babylonian monarch did not rest in the tomb which he had prepared for himself. His body was "cast out"—left, apparently, where it fell in battle. If there is allusion to any individual, it is probably to Belshazzar (Dan. v. 30). **Like an abominable branch**. As a shoot from a tree, which is disapproved, and so condemned and cut away. **As the raiment of those that are slain**. The garments of the slain, soaked in blood (ch. ix. 5), were useless, and were consequently flung away or left to rot uncared for. So was it with the corpse of the great king. **That go down to the stones of the pit**. This clause is thought to be misplaced. It deranges the metre and damages the sense. Corpses were not interred on fields of battle in the East (Herod., iii. 26). They were left to be "trodden underfoot." It is best, with Ewald and Mr. Cheyne, to transfer the clause to the commencement of the next verse. Thus the fourth stanza is relieved, and the fifth properly filled out.

Ver. 20.—If we make the alteration suggested in the preceding note, this verse will begin as follows: "They that have gone down to the stones of the pit, with these thou shalt not be joined in burial"—a repetition certainly of the first clause of ver. 19, but with amplification, and with the reason appended. **Thou hast destroyed thy land**; *i.e.* "brought ruin on it by displeasing God, and causing him to visit it with a judgment." **The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned**; rather, *shall not be named for ever* (comp. Ps. cix. 13). The meaning is that they shall have no seed, or, if they have any, that it shall be early cut off, and the whole race blotted out. Pretenders rose up under Darius Hystaspis, claiming descent from Belshazzar's father, Nabonidus; but the claim is characterized as false, and a false claim would scarcely have been set up had real descendants survived.

Ver. 21.—**Prepare slaughter for his children**. Belshazzar had "wives and concubines" (Dan. v. 2), and therefore probably children. The magnanimity of Cyrus may have spared them; but neither Cambyses nor Darius Hystaspis had the same merciful disposition. As soon as there was seen to be danger of Babylon revolting, they would almost certainly be put to death. **For the iniquity of their fathers** (comp. Exod. xx. 5). The destruction of their posterity was a part of the punishment of the fathers. **That they do not rise**; *i.e.* "that they do not recover themselves and become great monarchs once more, and once more build great cities," such as those which they were famous for — Babel, Erech, Accad, Calneh, Ur, Sepharvaim, Borsippa, Opis, Teredon, etc. It was as city-builders that the Babylonians were especially celebrated (Gen. x. 10; Dan. iv. 30; Herod., i. 178, etc.).

Vers. 22, 23.—These verses constitute the epode of the poem. Their main object is to make it clear that the punishment about to fall on Babylon comes from none other than Jehovah, whose Name occurs twice in ver. 22, and emphatically closes ver. 23. The lines are much more irregular than those of the strophes, or stanzas.

Ver. 22.—**And cut off from Babylon the name**. It is not quite clear in what sense her "name" was to be "cut off" from Babylon. One of the main masses of ruin still bears the old name almost unchanged (*Babil*), and can scarcely be supposed to have lost it and afterwards recovered it. Perhaps "name" here means "fame" or "celebrity" (comp. Deut. xxvi. 19; Zeph. iii. 20). **Son and nephew**; rather, *son and grandson*, or *issue and descendants*. The same phrase occurs in the same sense in Gen. xxi. 23 and Job xviii. 19.

Ver. 23.—**A possession for the bittern**. Some water-bird or other is probably intended, since the word used is joined in ch. xxxvi. 11 with the names of three other birds, and is also certainly a bird's name in Zeph. ii. 14; but the identification with the "bittern" is a mere guess, and rests on no authority. **And pools of water**. The swampy character of the country about the ruins of Babylon is generally noticed by travellers. It arises from neglect of the dams along the course of the Euphrates. Ker Porter says that "large deposits of the Euphrates water are left stagnant in the hollows between the ruins" ('Travels,' vol. ii. p. 389).

Vers. 24—27.—A FURTHER PROPHECY OF DELIVERANCE FROM ASSYRIA. From the dis-

tant prospect of an ultimate deliverance from the power of Babylon, the prophet turns his gaze to a nearer, if not a greater, deliverance. The present enemy is Assyria. It is she who has carried Samaria into captivity, and who now threatens the independence of Judah. Deliverance from her has already been promised more than once (ch. x. 16—19, 25—27, 33, 34); but apparently the people are not reassured—they still dread the foe who is so near, and who seems so irresistible. God, therefore, condescends to give them a fresh prophecy, a fresh assurance, and to confirm it to them *by an oath* (ver. 24). The Assyrian power shall be broken—her yoke shall be cast off (ver. 25); God has declared his purpose, and nothing can hinder it (ver. 27).

Ver. 24.—**Hath sworn.** This is the emphatic word—the *new* thing in the prophecy. God but seldom declares his purposes *with an oath*—never but in condescension to the weakness of his creatures, who, though they misdoubt his word, can feel the immutability of an oath (Heb. vi. 17), and yield it the credence and the confidence which they refuse to a bare assertion. **As I have thought . . . as I have purposed.** A reference to the prophecies previously given in ch. x. **So shall it come to pass**; literally, *so it hath been*—a striking instance of the "preterite of prophetic certainty." So **shall it stand**; literally, *as I have purposed, that shall stand.*

Ver. 25.—**I will break the Assyrian in my land.** This is referred by some critics to the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's army, and regarded as a proof that the scene of that destruction was Judæa. But it is possible that a disaster to the forces of Sargon may be intended (see the comment on ch. x. 28—32). **His yoke shall depart from off them** (comp. ch. x. 27). The Assyrian yoke, imposed by Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings xvi. 7—10), and (according to his own inscriptions) again by Sargon, was thrown off by Hezekiah, who "rebelled against the King of Assyria, and served him not" (2 Kings xviii. 7). It was this rebellion that provoked the expedition of Sennacherib, described in 2 Kings xviii. 13—16; and it may be this rejection of the yoke which is here prophesied.

Ver. 26.—**The whole earth . . . all the nations.** Blows struck against Assyria or Babylonia affected all the then known nations. Each, in its turn, was "the hammer of the whole earth" (Jer. l. 23), and a check received by either caused world-wide disturbance. No sooner did one subject nation recover her freedom, than an electric shock ran through all the rest—plots were laid, confederacies formed, revolts planned, embassies sent hither and thither. The complete destruction of Assyria involved a complete change in the relations, not only of the principal powers—Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Media, Elam, but even of the minor ones—Philistia, Edom, Moab, Syria, Phœnicia, Ammon.

Ver. 27.—**His hand is stretched out**; literally, *his is the outstretched hand*, which is more emphatic.

Vers. 28—32.—THE BURDEN OF PHILISTIA. The Philistines had suffered grievously at the hands of Judah in the reign of Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6), and had retaliated in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 18). It would seem that after this they were invaded by Tiglath-Pileser, who penetrated as far as Gaza, which he took ('Records of the Past,' vol. v. p. 51) and made tributary, as he also did Ascalon ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 399). Tiglath-Pileser died shortly before Ahaz, and the present "burden" seems to have been uttered in connection with his death. Isaiah warns Philistia (equivalent to "Palestina") that her rejoicing is premature; Tiglath-Pileser will have successors as powerful and as cruel as himself, and these successors will carry destruction and ravage over the whole land.

Ver. 28.—**In the year that King Ahaz died was this burden.** These words introduce the "burden of Philistia," and shows that it is chronologically out of place, since the prophecies from ch. x. to ch. xiv. 1—27 have belonged to the reign of Hezekiah. Ahaz appears to have died early in B.C. 725.

Ver. 29.—**Whole Palestina.** The Greeks called Philistia τὴν Παλαιστίνην Συρίαν, or "Syria of the Philistines," whence the Latin "Palestina" and our "Palestine." Isaiah addresses the country as "*whole* Palestine," because, while it was made up of a number of principalities (1 Sam. vi. 18), his message concerned it in its entirety. **The rod of him that smote thee is broken.** This can scarcely refer to the death of Ahaz, since Ahaz did not smite the Philistines, but was smitten by them (2 Chron. xxviii. 18). It may, however, refer to the death of Tiglath-Pileser, which took place only a year or two previously. **Out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice**; *i.e.* a more poisonous serpent (see note on ch. xi. 8). Shalmaneser can scarcely be meant, since he does not appear to have attacked the Philistines. Probably Sargon is intended, who "took Ashdod" (ch. xx. 1), made Khanun, King of Gaza, prisoner ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 5), and reduced Philistia generally to

subjection. And his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. The fruit of the cockatrice will be even more terrible and venomous. He will resemble the "fiery flying serpent" of the wilderness (Numb. xxi. 6). Sennacherib is, perhaps, this "fruit." He conquered Ascalon ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 432) and Ekron (ibid., p. 433), and had the kings of Gaza and Ashdod among his tributaries (ibid., p. 438, note 11).

Ver. 30.—**The firstborn of the poor shall feed.** The "firstborn of the poor" are the *very* poor (Jarchi, Rosenmüller). The reference is to the poor *Israelites*, who will "feed" and "lie down in safety" when Philistia is held in subjection. **I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.** God kills with famine, man with the sword (see 2 Sam. xxiv. 13, 14). When the Philistines had resisted behind their strong walls till hunger had done its work by thinning their ranks, the Assyrian conqueror would storm their strongholds and slaughter "the remnant."

Ver. 31.—**Howl, O gate; cry, O city.** Each city of Philistia is bidden to howl and lament. All will suffer; not one will be spared. **Art dissolved;** literally, *art melted;* i.e. "faintest through fear" (comp. Josh. ii. 9; Jer. xlix. 23). **There shall come from the north a smoke.** The "smoke" is the Assyrian host, which ravages the country as it advances, burning towns, and villages, and peasants' cots, and watchmen's towers. It enters the country "from the north," as a matter of course, where it adjoins upon Judæa. The coast route, which led through the Plain of Sharon, was that commonly followed by Egyptian armies. **None shall be alone in his appointed times;** rather, *there shall be no straggler at the rendezvous.*

Ver. 32.—**What shall one then answer,** etc.? What answer shall be made to the Philistine ambassadors, when they come to Jerusalem and entreat for aid? Simply this—that God has founded and will protect Zion, and that the poor and weak among God's people—whether Jews or Philistines—had better betake themselves to the shelter of the "city of the great King."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—23.—*Triumph over enemies.* The "taunt-song" of Israel, as it has been called (Cheyne), like the "song of Deborah" in the Book of Judges (v.), raises the question how far triumph over a national enemy is a feeling that can be indulged with propriety. There can be no doubt that it is—

I. A NATURAL FEELING. "The song of Deborah and Barak" expresses the feelings which have usually animated the victors in national contests from the beginning of the world to the present day. The poems of Homer show us the great warriors of the heroic age giving the freest possible vent to their passions of scorn and hatred on such occasions. The heroes of Germany and Iceland indulge in the same strain. North American Indians are said to have been equally outspoken. The "natural man" would, beyond all question, on every occasion of the kind, give free and unfettered expression to his feelings of triumph and delight, nor would he see any reason for checking his feelings, or making any effort to moderate them. There is also a good side to the feeling, inasmuch as it is—

II. CONNECTED WITH THANKFULNESS TO GOD FOR DELIVERANCE. In the song of Deborah and Barak, and again in the song of Moses (Exod. xv. 1—21), this is very marked. "Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel" (Judg. v. 2, 3). "The Lord is my Strength and Song, and is become my Salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his Name" (Exod. xv. 2, 3). "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exod. xv. 21). It is not their own valour, or strength, or prudence, and warlike skill that the Hebrew leaders vaunt in their songs of triumph, but the greatness and strength and wisdom of the God who has given to them the victory over their enemies. And so the Christian song of joy for a victory has ever been the "Te Deum"—"We praise *thee*, O God; we acknowledge *thee* to be the Lord." So long as wars continue, so long as swords are not beaten into ploughshares, or spears into pruning-hooks (ch. ii. 4), it must be right for the combatants to look to the God of battles for aid and countenance and success; and if so, it must be right for them to return him thanks for his aid given, which can best be done by songs of praise and psalms of thanks-

giving. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the feeling of triumph is one which ought to be very carefully watched and kept under control, since it is—

III. LIABLE TO DEGENERATE INTO SELF-GLORIFICATION. When Assyria was victorious, her song of triumph was as follows: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or chirped" (ch. x. 13, 14). There is *something* of the same spirit in the song of Deborah and Barak: "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, *until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel*" (Judg. v. 7). "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and *lead thy captivity captive*, thou son of Abinoam" (Judg. v. 12). Weak human nature is apt to have its head turned by success, and to attribute the result to its own prowess, instead of the mercy and goodness of God.

IV. LIABLE TO DEGENERATE INTO SCORN OF, AND INSULTATION OVER, THE ENEMY. Scorn and insult are utterly unchristian, and a Christian "song of triumph" should most carefully avoid them; but they are very dear to the "natural man," and very apt to show themselves in the outpourings of a human heart on the occasion of a triumph. The closing passage of the song of Deborah is of the nature of insult, and so is a considerable portion of Isaiah's "taunt-song." The "evangelical prophet" was not himself fully possessed of the evangelical spirit. In his time the precept had not yet gone forth, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 44), and men believed it to be natural and right to hate them (see Ps. cxxxix. 22). Insult and scorn were but indications of hate, or of hate mingled with contempt for those who had been proved weak, and so seemed to be legitimately bestowed on beaten foes. But the Christian may hate no man, may despise no man, knowing that each human soul is in God's sight of priceless value. Consequently, although he may rejoice in victory, and even compose songs of triumph, he is bound to avoid anything like insultation over the defeated. They are his brethren, they are souls for whom Christ died; they may be among those with whom he will hold sweet converse in the world to come.

Ver. 24.—*God's condescension in confirming promises by oath.* It is a weakness on the part of man to need any confirmation of a promise which God makes. "God cannot lie" (Titus ii. 18); "He keepeth his promise for ever" (Ps. cxlvi. 6). When he condescends to swear that his promise shall hold good, it does not really add to the certainty of the thing promised, since the certainty was absolute from the first. But man is so accustomed to misdoubt his fellows that he will even misdoubt God, as though with him were "variableness or shadow of turning." And God, knowing man's heart and compassionating his weakness, does sometimes, though but rarely, add to his promises, for man's greater contentment, the confirmation of an oath. After the Flood God covenanted with mankind that he would never again destroy the earth by water (Gen. ix. 11), and confirmed the covenant by oath (ch. lxv. 9). On the call of Abraham, he swore that he would give the land of Canaan to his posterity (Gen. xxiv. 7), and afterwards that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. With David he made a covenant, and swore to it, that he would "establish his seed for ever, and build up his throne to all generations" (Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4). To his own Son he swore, at what time we know not, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. cx. 4). And here we find that he condescended to swear to Israel that the Assyrians should "be broken," and their yoke "depart off them." Wonderful condescension of him whose word is truth! Not merely not to punish those who doubt him, but to compassionate them, to make allowance for them, to yield compliance to their weakness, and give them such an assurance as compels their belief. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, they might have a strong consolation"—a hope on which to anchor their soul (Heb. vi. 17—19).

Ver. 32.—*No sure refuge but Zion.* When danger threatens men commonly invoke

human aid—"trust in Egypt, fly to Assyria"—think to be safe if some great king, or powerful statesman, or important country, will take them under protection. But every such refuge is untrustworthy. States prove themselves "bruised reeds" in the time of trouble, "piercing the hand which leans on them" (2 Kings xviii. 21). Princes disappoint expectation, and show that "there is no help in them" (Ps. cxlvi. 3). Statesmen find it inconvenient to redeem the pledges which they have given, and turn a deaf ear to the appeals for aid addressed to them. But the ear of God is always open to men's cries. They may appeal with confidence to him either in—

I. THE EARTHLY ZION, his holy mountain, the "city set upon an hill" (Matt. v. 14), in which he has promised that there shall dwell his presence for ever. The Church of God, founded upon the sure rock of faith in Christ, is a refuge from the assaults of doubt and unbelief, from the wiles of Satan, from the seductions of evil men. When the great army of unbelief advances, like a smoke from the north (ver. 31), and threatens to obscure the whole world with the dark mantle of agnosticism, marshalling its hosts with military precision, so that "there is not one straggler at the rendezvous," let men remember one thing, "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people may trust in it" (ver. 32). The poor of his people, such as feel themselves "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17), may find in the Church of Christ—the Church with which he continues always, "even unto the end of the world"—a refuge, a defence, a rallying-point, from which they may defy the dark host of their enemies. Against the Church the gates of hell shall not prevail. Her Lord is her Defender, and will give her victory over all her foes. The Lord's people may safely trust in her. Or, if this does not suffice, if (as happens to men in some moods) every earthly stay seems vain, they may go "boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb. iv. 16), and address themselves directly to God in—

II. THE HEAVENLY ZION—the "heaven of heavens"—the sphere where he sits enthroned above angels and archangels, yet from which he is ever lending an attentive ear to the cry of all his creatures. The earthly Zion is but a temporary abiding-place for individuals; the heavenly Zion is alone their true home. In the heavenly Zion alone are they wholly safe—saved, garnered, gathered in, secure for ever. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 1); there is "the river of the water of life, clear as crystal" (Rev. xxii. 1); there is the "tree of life," with its "twelve manner of fruits," and its leaves which are "for the healing of the nations" (Rev. xxii. 2). The earthly Zion is but a type of the heavenly; it is on the heavenly that our thoughts should rest, our minds dwell, our spirits stay themselves (Col. iii. 1—3).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*Song of redeemed Israel.* I. THE OCCASION OF THE SONG. (Vers. 1—3.) The immediate purpose of that awful convulsion of the nations described in the preceding chapter was judgment; but beyond this lies the purpose of mercy. The inspired song of Israel is ever of "mercy and judgment." One loving purpose works, whether through the hiding of the cloud and the storm, or in the manifest brightness of the calm summer day. Whether he makes himself known to us amidst terror and trembling, or in peace and tranquilly flowing hours, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." After the storm comes the still small voice, heard in the sanctuary, echoed in the heart, "Fear not; I am with thee." Jehovah will give his people rest in their land from the cruel sufferings of slavery. The heathen will look on, astonished at the deliverance of Israel, and will be convinced that there is a truth in the religion of Israel superior to that of their own. They will escort the people of Jehovah to the sacred place, and there become attached to their service as dependents. To the prophetic conscience it seems that this is but in accordance with the law of compensation. It seems preposterous, nothing less than an invasion of the true order of things, for a community which holds the purest principles to be enslaved to one whose power is built on falsehood. The conscience of the prophet teaches him that as God is right, so there must be a rectification of the world's wrong. The present first must become the last, and the last first, and the world must be turned upside down, that Israel may obtain and retain her destined lead among the nations. This is a leading ideal of

prophecy, and we find it reappearing in the days of Christ. We may, indeed, without straining a point, say that such predictions, born of the profoundest religious convictions, have been fulfilled in the course of our religion. It will hardly be denied that the great spiritual principles summed up in the phrase, "the kingdom of God upon earth," have grown upon the world, have obtained a larger and more commanding recognition with every great change among the nations. Israel, Greece, broke up as nations only to resign their deposit of truth to a larger stewardship; and Rome's work was fulfilled when she became the vehicle of Christianity to the wide Western world. The *forms* of Divine fulfilment seen by the prophets in their forecast may not have been always the truest forms, limited as they were by conditions of space and time. The substance and spirit of their message was of eternal truth.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE SONG. (Vers. 4—8.) 1. *The picture of rest from tyranny.* The Babylonian oppressor shall be quelled; his lordly pride and wrath shall cease. For the staff of authority wielded by impious hands shall be broken, the tyrant's sceptre dashed from his hand. His part will be reversed; having incessantly smitten the people in his cruel rage, and trodden them beneath his feet in the exercise of arbitrary and unchecked power, he will himself be powerless, as all injustice must be, disjoined from physical force. See the critical notes for the discussion of the meaning of the words, and the strong images of violence, inspired by tyrannic caprice and cruelty, which they call up in the imagination. "The oppressor's scorn, the proud man's contumely," are enumerated by our great poets among those conditions which tempt men to doubt the worth of existence. Take away the freedom of religious life, the placid enjoyment of old customs of family and social life, from a people, and you extract from them the relish for life.

"'Tis liberty, fair liberty alone,
That gives the fleeting flower of life its sweetness and perfume."

There is no deeper passion, nor one more just, than the hatred of tyranny, in the human breast. If we look at the question from the point of view of the tyrant himself, his lot is odious. Xenophon represents Hiero of Syracuse lamenting to the poet Simonides his unhappiness. He must surround himself with guards whom he cannot trust. Intimate friendship, such as blesses the meanest of his subjects, must be to him denied. He cannot close the sleepless eye of suspicion. Amiable he may be and sympathetic by nature, yet his heart may not expand in the chilling atmosphere which surrounds him. The cruel necessities of power may even render the lot of the oppressor less enviable than that of the oppressed. The heart of the people in every land and age cries out against tyranny as an abuse of the moral order, a violence done to the nature of things. And the true prophet, ever feeling in unison with that heart, translating its dim yearnings into articulate oracles, denounces and predicts the downfall of tyranny as inevitable, if the kingdom of Jehovah on earth is a reality. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." "The empire is peace." These words, once uttered vainly by a potentate in our time, and soon sternly refuted by the roar of artillery from around the walls of his fair city and from a score of battle-fields throughout his pleasant land, contain the policy of the kingdom of the Messiah. Selfishness, ambition, tyranny of individual wills,—these are the most constant causes of restlessness and war. When "all man's good" shall be "each man's rule," such evils will be impossible; the "unsuffering kingdom" of the Messiah will come, and the meek will inherit the earth. 2. *The sympathy of nature with man.* How exquisite is the poetic feeling for nature in the next verses (7, 8)! Like all the imagery of Hebrew poesy, they are full of simplicity, sublimity, pathos. "Now resteth, now is quiet all the earth; songs of jubilation break forth. The cypresses rejoice on thy account, the cedars of Lebanon. Since thou liest low (they say) none will come up to lay the axe against us." The Chaldean used the wood of these trees, of great durability, for his buildings, his besieging apparatus, his ships. A small remnant, heirs of those magnificent trees on Lebanon of the prophet's time, still stands on the spot. They seem, in their robust and beautiful forms, the very type of human life in the ideal freedom and independence of its growth. There is a strong poetic feeling for the tree in the Hebrew psalmists and prophets. The just man is like the tree planted by the flowing stream, or like the palm flourishing in the desert, the image of outward suffering and deprivation. We all yearn for the

sight of the trees. We cannot see their leaves fall in autumn without something of a pang. We hail the returning blush on the beech woods of our own land in the spring-time, and the dimly deepening green of the hedgerows. A silent sense of sympathy steals to our heart, as if sickness, old age, and death were illusions, life the only reality. The dimpling reflections of the sunlight on the leaves are as smiles, and as a whisper from the spiritual world the rustle of the wind among them. We can understand how in olden time men felt the trees to be oracular, and believed, or half believed them to be tenanted by supernatural beings. A landscape without a tree, like a sea without a sail, is a sight we cannot long endure without pain. Such feelings have undoubtedly a religious meaning and value. As we listen to them and cultivate them, the faith grows stronger that a Divine love and sympathy is stirring at the very heart of things. It is an ill thing if we permit on every occasion our cold scientific conscience to chide us out of such a mood. In the present exalted mood of the prophet, the trees seem not merely to offer a silent sympathy, but to find tongue and to break forth into articulate triumph. Still more boldly, in ch. lv. 12, they are conceived as clapping their hands in joy. Here the cypresses and cedars, appropriated by the patriotic eagerness of the prophet, as it were, exult in deliverance from the axe of the alien feller, as he exults in the breaking of the alien sceptre.

III. LESSON ON THE SYMPATHY OF MIND WITH NATURE. Let us not be tempted to idle words in speaking of that high faculty of poetic fancy exercised upon the objects and scenes of nature, and illustrated in this passage. A great spiritual poet of our age —Wordsworth—has taught us religiously to cherish it. We accept the teaching, but not in its exaggerated forms. It has been asserted as a principle of primary and universal import, that "it has pleased God to educate mankind from the beginning through impressions derived from the phenomena of the natural world." A sounder theology and a juster theory of the imagination teaches otherwise. The home, the school, the Church, the state, society,—these are the scenes of our spirit's training in religion and in morals, for time and for eternity. We cast upon the forms of the external world reflections of sentiments and truths we could not divine from that world. We know the physical cosmos through the moral cosmos, not *vice versâ*. As to poets of the highest order, all have been at home in the grandeurs of the spiritual world, not all have been affected by the forms of nature. This has been especially remarked of Dante. This observation is fixed almost exclusively upon the Divine and human world. And, indeed, it must be admitted that the noblest objects of contemplation are God and man himself. "The universe and all its fair and glorious forms is indeed included in the wide empire of imagination; but she has placed her home and her sanctuary amidst the inexhaustible varieties and impenetrable mysteries of the human mind. . . . Is it not the fact that external objects never strongly excite our feelings but when they are contemplated with reference to man, as illustrating his destiny or as influencing his character?" (Macaulay). We can find in Nature only what we take to her. The key to her mystical meanings is to be found in the awakened conscience, the heart made pure. Petrarch, unlike Dante, loved the face of nature. But on one occasion, in the midst of a glow of delight in a glorious prospect, he remembered that he had a volume of St. Augustine in his pocket. Opening the book at random, he read these words: "Men go to admire the lofty mountains, the mighty sea-billows, the broad courses of the rivers, the circuit of the ocean, the orbit of the stars, and they neglect themselves." He closed the book and reproached himself. Even the heathen philosophers might have taught him a deeper truth. Doubtless. Socrates said that "trees did not teach him anything, but man." Let us adapt the saying to religious feeling. The trees will yield no oracles but those which have been first heard in the inmost conscience. And if there are times when they seem to whisper of gladness, or to smile and clap their hands for joy, it is because God has already opened a fountain of perennial trust and hope within the soul. Then "fruitful trees and all cedars" will praise the Lord, when the heart is filled with praise. "The outward face of nature is a religious communication to those who come to it with the religious element already in them, but no man can get a religion out of the beauty of nature. Those who have first made the knowledge of themselves and their own souls their care, its glory has ever turned to light and hope. They have read in nature an augury and a presage; they have found in it a language and a revelation" (Mozley).—J.

Vers. 9—23.—*Song of redeemed Israel: the scene in Hades.* I. ENTRANCE OF THE TYRANT INTO THE UNDERWORLD. (Vers. 9—11.) The realm of the departed trembles with the excitement of expectation as the great potentate of Babylonia approaches to take up his abode in those gloomy regions. The shades of departed chiefs and kings bestir themselves, and rise from their thrones in amazement to greet the newcomer. "Hast thou also become weak like us? Art thou become one of us?" His pomp and splendour is cast down to the lowest depth, the sound of his festive harp is silenced in that joyless place. Instead of his costly rugs, maggots are now his bedclothes, and his counterpane worms.

II. IDEAS OF THE UNDERWORLD. These pictures reach far back into antiquity, and represent a deep and universal belief in the heart of mankind. *Sheôl* among the Hebrews, *Hades* and *Tartaros* among the Greeks, the realm of Dis or Pluto among the Romans, are different representations of the same ideas of conscience. But with the Hebrew it is connected more sublimely and simply with the faith in the one supreme and righteous God. 1. *It is viewed as a state of physical exhaustion.* In Homer ('Odyssey,' xi.) the departed are described as faint, helpless ghosts, who recover not memory and consciousness till they have drunk of the blood poured by Odysseus into the trench. And when his mother has thus revived and has spoken to him—

> "Thrice in my arms I strove her shade to bind;
> Thrice through my arms she slipp'd like empty wind,
> Or dreams, the vain illusion of the mind. . . .
> All, all are such when life the body leaves!
> No more the substance of the man remains,
> Nor bounds the blood along the purple veins."

Pale and wan beneath those "nether skies," their lot is in extreme contrast to that of their friends who still "breathe in realms of cheerful day." 2. *It is a place of profound sadness and regret.* Who can forget the piercing pathos of Achilles' words when Odysseus hails him as a king among the shades, even as on earth he had been a guardian divinity to his countrymen—

> "Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,
> Nor think vain words (he cried) can ease my doom.
> Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear
> A weight of woes and breathe the vital air,
> A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,
> Than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead."

Oh, how gladly, exclaims Virgil, in describing the suicides in hell, would they now endure poverty and toil beneath the deep sky! But vain the wish; justice forbids, and they must remain confined in the horrid swamp, with its melancholy waters, shut in by the ninefold stream of Styx. A sullen discontent is the mood of others, like Ajax, brooding over the loss of the prize of arms. It is a scene of hopelessness. The descent is easy; but to retrace the steps—the Roman poet admits the possibility only to a few, sons of gods, favoured by Jupiter, or inspired by superhuman virtue. Says the gloomy Italian, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here." In the soul, where all these dread events must happen, first and last, what is this weakness, this unavailing regret, this void of hope, but the reaction of powers abused, of passions indulged beyond their proper bound? According to our sowing must be our reaping, and our daily deeds must be reflecting their colour upon the wall of the inner chamber of the mind, till it becomes to us either prison or palace, a hell or a heaven.

III. THE CONTEMPLATION OF PAST GREATNESS. From the depth of sorrow men learn to measure past blessings, from the lowest point of abject humiliation the height of previous greatness. Two things, in all history, in all legend, in the experience of daily life, impress the imagination, and through the imagination the moral conscience—the rise of the obscure into glory, and the fall of the great into ignominy. Such changes hint at a great law, the principle of which is one, the effects of whose operation are dual and diverse. The King of Babel had been as the morning star, the type of the Orient in all its splendour of intellectual light, heralding the dawn and the onward march of the sun. How true a proposition is it in reference

to human culture, "Light comes from the East"! Babylonia was an early centre of such culture; and dimly through the records of the past we may there discern all those passions and energies at work in that great kingdom which lead first to external greatness, then to moral corruption, finally to external ruin. The remains of Oriental architecture, as significant to those who understand the ethical meaning of art as a whole literature could have been, speak of a towering ambition, such as the prophet here describes. In no way can we be more astonished at the vastness of the passions of man's little heart, than in contemplating those colossal tombs and temples and palaces of ancient lands. They seem a visible challenge to time, a defiance of death, an arrogation of divinity and of immortality. To the prophet they, with other accompaniments of despotic power, appeared as the attempt of vain man to measure himself with heaven. The secret thought he detects in the heart of the tyrant is, "To heaven I will ascend, beyond God's stars I will raise my throne, and sit down on the mount of all the gods, in the extreme north; will ascend to the heights of the clouds, and make myself like the Most High." The north was in ancient thought generally the sacred quarter. Zeus dwelt in Olympus, on the north borders of Greece. Apollo came from the Hyperboreans, the people beyond the north wind. Zion is "on the sides of the north, the city of the great king." And in his epiphany in the tempest, Jehovah comes in majesty from the north. The magnificent heathen would then have rivalled him. He said in his heart as he looked on his palaces and hanging gardens, as he reviewed his troops, as he listened to the echoes of Western alarms, "By the strength of my hand I have done it;" "As one gathereth deserted eggs, I have gathered all the earth" (ch. x. 11, 14). He felt himself to be like a magnificent tree, deftly striking his roots through the whole succulence of the earth, overtopping all other growths, sheltering all fowls in his branches, all beasts, yea, all nations, in his shade. All other trees, the cedar in the garden of God, the firtree and the chestnut, seemed to envy him (Ezek. xxx.). And now! Oh, tragic change! his boughs are broken, his branches scattered on the earth, his shade deserted; the birds and beasts remain, but only as haunters of a ruin. "Now thou art cast into hell, into the lowest depth."

IV. ASTONISHMENT AT PRESENT IGNOMINY. 1. *The world looks on.* "Is this the man who made the earth tremble through and through, who shook the kingdoms to their base? who made the world as a desert, and destroyed its cities, and let not his captives return home?" The scene is changed from Hades; no longer is the monarch viewed even as in the underworld, to which only the buried could pass. It is an outcast corpse the spectators look upon, and no sight could to ancient feeling be more abhorrent, or signify more deeply the curse of a hero's end. The other kings of the peoples rest each in his magnificent mausoleum; he lies amongst the meanest corpses of those slain upon the battle-field; not even hastily interred in a hole filled with stones, but liable to be trampled underfoot by the victor. He who would have grasped the earth in his ambitious embrace, cannot now find six feet of it to shelter his remains. The lurid light of such an end is cast back upon the beginning. To a prophetic eye false greatness is already smitten by the Divine judgment, the effects of which will be one day the amazement and the horror of men. 2. *The prophet reads the moral.* Such an end of the waster of lands and fierce murderer of peoples must serve as example and prototype to all times. It is no mere personal, but a dynastic doom. The seed of evil-doers, the tyrant's progeny, will pass into oblivion; his sons will expiate his offences in a bath of blood, so that the very species of human savages called "tyrants" shall no more be propagated. Every general truth has its particular application to a given time and condition; so every particular catastrophe that fills the nations with amaze is to be traced up to some great central ever-working cause. And for good or for evil, there is organic sympathy in the lives and fates of individuals. If we wrench ourselves not free from the family vice, what can we expect but the family doom? If we are partakers, by the force of custom or example, of the sins of our party, profession, class, we may not be exempt from the moral disgrace which must sooner or later overtake it.

V. CLOSING ORACLE. It uses images of the utmost energy and tragic vehemence. Jehovah will root out of Babylon name and remnant, sprout and shoot. It shall become the heritage of "hedgehogs and swamps," shall be swept with the besom

of destruction. The doom of great cities—what is it but the doom of individuals "writ large"? In that doom may be seen eternal justice; can we find mixing with it eternal mercy, eternal love? In these scenes of horror on earth, in the reflected miseries of Hades? Must history ever pursue its spiral course, and epicycle upon epicycle of sin and damnation eternally succeed? Let us fall back upon our deepest hopes, and think that the yearning of the creature cannot exceed that of the Creator, and that at the foundation of hell's floor must still be Divine justice and love. So Dante sang—

> "Justice the founder of my fabric moved;
> To rear me was the task of power Divine,
> Supremest wisdom, and primeval love."

J.

Vers. 24—28.—*Oracle concerning Asshur.* The fate of Sennacherib and his host appears to be introduced in order to confirm the solemn oracle just delivered concerning Babylon (see Exposition).

I. THE STRONG ASSURANCES OF JEHOVAH. He is represented here and in other passages as taking an oath that he will fulfil his Word. But in such oaths he can appeal to no mightier name, he can invoke no power more awful than his own. Homer makes Zeus swear by the Styx, the dark river of the underworld. And Zeus is himself subject to necessity, to fate. But the God of the Hebrews comprises in himself all the associations of woeful necessity, of irresistible fate; in a word, of law, of intelligence at one with will, of will equal to the execution of all the designs of intelligence. Where men are weak it is that the brain is separated from the hand and the foot. The thoughts that rise before them, they either cannot or they dare not translate immediately into fact. A chain of means, of secondary causes, lies between them and their ends. And so we have the great thinkers who cannot act, and the great actors who fail in thought. Magnificent poets, philosophers, dreamers, on the one side; on the other, magnificent conquerors—Alexanders, Napoleons; both stupendous failures. In God are united omniscience and omnipotence—the All-Thinker, the All-Doer. His purposes are equivalent to deeds; his deeds are living and visible thoughts.

II. THE DOOM OF THE ASSYRIAN. (See ch. x.) The prophetic tense and the prophetic mode of contemplation may refer to the past; so here. The thought is expressed in Jer. l. 18, 19, "Behold, I will punish the King of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the King of Assyria." The one event was a pledge of the other (Delitzsch). Asshur had been broken in Canaan, had been subdued upon the mountains of the Holy Land, and the people been released from his yoke and his burdens.

> "Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
> The host with their banners at sunset were seen;
> Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
> That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown. . . .
>
> "And the widows of Asshur were loud in their wail,
> And the idols were broke in the temple of Baal;
> And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

III. THE IMMUTABLE COUNSEL OF JEHOVAH. 1. *Its contents.* It is earth-embracing, and its symbol is the "hand stretched out over all the heathen." Assyria and Babylon destroyed, heathendom must vibrate through all its extent, and totter to its fall. Turning from the particular to the general—for only in this way can we reap the full instruction of such oracles—and standing amidst the ruins of fallen, or on the ground of now shaking empires, we may listen in awe to the ever-living voice of him who saith, "I will shake all nations, till their Desire come." About a thousand years later, and we find Rome shaking beneath that outstretched hand. We may see the mementoes of that shock to-day, in the ruins of the Palatine and the Forum and the Sacred Way. Yet a thousand years, and again she shakes, this time to her inmost conscience, beneath that hand, that voice of judgment. At the Reformation it might seem that the Almighty was about to make a short work in the earth. But a thousand years are in

his sight but a day. "The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." Let us remember that the great cycles of history are repeated in small in the round of each man's life. The great world, the *macrocosmos*, is mirrored in the *microcosmos*, the small world of each conscience. Above every one of us the hand is outstretched—shall it be to bless or to curse? "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." 2. *Its inflexibility.* Who can break this counsel, who hinder or turn back that hand? And what people or confederacy of peoples, knit in closest alliance of arms and girt with all the furniture of war, can resist dissolution, when once his thought is against them, his hand upraised? "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us" (ch. viii. 10). So may the lovers of the truth and the right confidently exclaim, "God is with us." What the superstitious man calls his luck or fortune, what the metaphysician obscurely designates as necessity, or the nature of things, or the supremacy of the moral Law, is to the religious man the inflexible will of a personal Being. The duty, the art, the wisdom, the salvation of life, is in obedience to that will. It is to know that we are here to be acted upon by that will rather than to act from our own self-centre. We are "God's puppets." He gives to men and to nations a certain space wherein to learn what freedom is, and what its soon-reached limits. Then comes the higher lesson, to know that freedom can only be secured by obedience; that in the choice of the supreme will for our own will, we recover that better freedom in which is strength and peace and stability for ever.—J.

Vers. 28—32.—*Oracle concerning Philistia.* I. THE HISTORICAL OCCASION. It dates from about the time of the death of Ahaz, and was on his death incorporated with the book. The Edomites and the Philistines, who had given way before the powers of David, had taken advantage of the weakness of Ahaz's government to invade Judah. They had taken possession of several towns in the south of the land (2 Chron. xxviii. 17, 18). The Syrians in the front and the Philistines in the rear seemed to threaten and devour the land with open mouth (ch. ix. 12). But the year of the death of Ahaz brought Hezekiah to the throne, who successfully resisted Assyria and smote the Philistines to Gaza (2 Kings xviii. 8), not only recovering the cities, but defeating them in their own land. To this eventful time, then, the oracle belongs.

II. WARNING TO PHILISTIA. 1. *The might of the Davidic house.* Its symbols are a rod, a staff, a serpent, a cerastes or basilisk, and a flying dragon. The "rod that smote Philistia" was the sceptre of David and of Solomon, later wielded by Azariah or Uzziah (2 Kings xv. 1—7; 2 Chron. xxvi. 1), who broke down the wall of Gath and of Gabneh and of Ashdod. But the conflict with Syria and Ephraim had brought the power of Judah low; the rod was broken in pieces. But the power of Judah is no mere rod; a root is the fitting symbol of its inexhaustible vigour. The terebinth oak is not perished when its leafy honours have fallen (ch. vi. 13), and from the root of Jesse a young sucker shall yet spring (ch. xi. 1). With this symbol is connected that of the serpent, also widely viewed in antiquity as a chthonic symbol, *i.e.* as representing the powers supposed to be seated in the heart of the earth. The serpent is a "son of earth," and this significance may be seen illustrated in the story of the appearance of the serpents, which were devoured by horses, to Crœsus. The horses symbolized the invading enemy, under Cyrus (Herod., i. 78). The Greek legends of the slaying of a serpent or dragon by a hero, seem in several cases to denote the taking possession of a land—or of a sanctuary—Apollo, Perseus, Bellerophon. If such be the meaning of the serpent here, then, says the prophet, so far from destroying the serpent of Judah, its power in the land, the Philistine will encounter a more dangerous and deadly form of that power. A cerastes or basilisk shall arise in the person of Hezekiah; nay, a flying dragon shall be the ripe fruit from the indestructible root. The flying dragon is explained by the Targum to be the Messiah, so that the reference would be to the Davidic government of the immediate future under Hezekiah, and that of the ultimate future under the coming Anointed (Delitzsch). Ewald, however, refers to the Assyrian. In religious symbolism the dragon stands for the foul fiend; in historical symbolism he may stand for the avenger, as here. The tribal ensign of Dan was in like manner the serpent (Gen. xlix. 17), whose deadly hatred to the Philistines appeared in the deeds of the hero Samson. 2. *Effects of the Davidic rule.* The poor will feed upon Jehovah's pasture, and the helpless lie down in peace. Deeply depressed, menaced on

every hand, they shall nevertheless find, under the care of the good Shepherd, nourishment and tranquillity unbroken by fears (cf. Zeph. iii. 12, 13). The foe will be eradicated by starvation or put to the sword. The picture may be regarded, as other similar pictures, as an allegory of the rule of the eternal Messiah, the enjoyment of the eternal sabbath. For historical relations ever give back some reflection of eternal verities, and these verities enter into and govern the events of every epoch. From every time of national distress, of personal trouble, the spiritual song, undying in its truth and assurance, may be heard arising, "Jehovah is my Shepherd; I shall not want . . . He prepareth for me a table in the presence of mine enemies."

III. CALM AMIDST THE STORMS. Let the strong cities of Philistia lift up the cry of wailing. A smoke, and behind the smoke dense unbroken ranks of men are rolling from the north. Firm is their discipline, united and invincible their army. What, then, will be Judah's fate? Shall she, too, melt away in the fire? What answer do the messengers of the nations bring? "*That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and upon it the sufferers of my people trust.*" Nothing can bring us triumph but the adherence to principle; nothing should dismay us where that adherence is constant. "Reverence the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread; and he shall be for a Sanctuary" (ch. viii. 13). "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (ch. xxviii. 16). The "poor of the flock" (Zech. xi. 7), the despised, suffering, and persecuted in every age, are welcome to the sanctuary and to the heart of the great God. While the tempest rages without and his judgments are abroad in the earth, they are sheltered in his pavilion, concealed in the secret place of the Most High. The lowly heart, looking up to that hand, so awful in menace towards all that is "high and lifted up," sees it relax, expand, become as a canopy of protecting tenderness. The suffering are stronger than they seem; they know a way of escape from the worst; they can flee to the Name of Jehovah as a strong Tower; they can enter their closet and shut to the door; they can pray to the Father in secret. The thought of eternal Love is itself a "little sanctuary," whose walls, as they tarry there, recede, open, and afford the prospect of eternal day.—J.

Ver. 5.—*The false staff.* "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked." True of the King of Babylon, this is true also of every evil man. It was a sentence that God commanded to be taken up as a proverb against him, and it may be illustrated as a universal proverb in all ages and nations. Men *lean* on a staff; and unless God be the Rod and the Staff, assuredly it will be broken.

I. HEALTH IS A STAFF. Men lean on that. A well-organized frame and a well-strung nervous system cause men to mistake the tranquil composure of good spirits for the peace which only religion can bestow. Then comes the season of affliction; the silver cord, if not loosened, is weakened; the golden bowl, symbol of the brain, if not broken, is sadly shaken; and with broken health, all else seems broken too. The spirits fail, the inspirations of enterprise and endeavour are weakened, and the proud staff is broken.

II. WEALTH IS A STAFF. Wicked men find that money "answereth all things." It is the key that unlocks the gates of art and travel, and the loadstone that draws genius and beauty to their festivals. It seems a strong support, and, leaning on it, many are tempted to pity the noblest hero if he be poor, and the rarest intellect if it be linked with low estate. But riches take to themselves wings and flee away. The bank breaks, the factory burns, the funds fall, the mines are exhausted; and then, with the departure of riches, departs also feigned affection and the flatterer's praise. "How hath the golden city ceased!"

III. POWER IS A STAFF. They shall say (ver. 4), "How hath the oppressor ceased!" etc. For wicked men often have such power over others that they can use them for their evil schemes, and bribe them so that they tell no tales that shall bring shame and dishonour. But this does not last. Some "revealing hour" comes. The man that has been "lifted up" is laid low; he can no longer use his old power. Lost character has left him discrowned. Even worldly men will not trust him now. The Josephs are honoured; the Daniels are trusted. The Mordecais are doomed. No staff will support in life or death but the old staff: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—3.—*The reign of sin and the rest of God.* Taking the period of exile as a picture of the condition of the human soul when it is in a foreign land, under the sway of the enemy, apart and afar from its true heritage, and regarding the return and the "rest" (ver. 3) in their own land as a picture of the soul's condition when it has been brought back to God and has re-entered on his service, we have here some valuable suggestions.

I. OUR SPIRITUAL CONDITION UNDER THE REIGN OF SIN. 1. *It is one in which we may look for sorrow,* and sorrow unrelieved by those alleviations in which godliness finds its solace (ver. 3). Sin and sorrow go hand-in-hand, or, if not thus conjoined, the latter follows surely and steadily on the steps of the former. The grosser transgressions bring the sterner miseries, but all departure from God and from rectitude leads down to trouble, to dissatisfaction, to sadness of spirit. 2. *It is one in which anxiety is always appropriate.* "Thy fear" (ver. 3). For it is a condition in which the Divine Disposer of everything is unreconciled to us, is decidedly and seriously displeased with us, is warning us of an evil doom; in which we have no right to reckon on the continuance of his kindness for another hour, and in which the termination of our earthly course places us before a judgment-bar at which we are not prepared to stand. 3. *It is one of spiritual bondage.* "Thy hard bondage" (ver. 3). How truly sin is a slavery we see when we regard it in its more flagrant forms. We see the drunkard, the opium-eater, the liar, so enslaved by their respective vices, that, try how they may to free themselves, they are held down as by an unseverable chain. The children of folly are its pitiable victims, held in a "hard bondage" from which they strive to escape, and often strive in vain. All sin, that of omission as well as commission, is enslaving. The withholding from God that which he claims leads the soul down into a confirmed habit of neglect, of indifference, of procrastination, which holds it fast in its evil toils. 4. *It is one of exile.* They who are living in sin are living in a country, which, emphatically, is not "their own land" (ver. 1). They were created to live with God, consciously near to him, rejoicing in him, engaged perpetually in his service; under the sway of sin, human souls are living afar off, in a foreign country, in a "strange land" (Ps. cxxxvii. 4).

II. THE REST WHICH GOD GIVES US HERE. 1. *He sets his heart on us* to deliver us. He "has mercy on us; he chooses us" (ver 1). He looks upon each one of us with distinguishing interest, affection, yearning. He "earnestly remembers" us, that he may save us. 2. *He leads us back to himself.* By different ways he leads us home, and "sets us in our own land." He so acts upon our souls, in his grace and in his providence, that we are led to penitence and faith, and thus find ourselves back in his favour and his service. 3. *The condition to which God restores us is one of spiritual rest.* (1) We rest from sorrow in the possession of inward *peace* and abiding *joy.* (2) We rest from fear in the enjoyment of well-grounded *trust,* and a *hope* which will never make ashamed. (3) We rest from bondage in the heritage of a spiritual *freedom* (John viii. 36; Rom. viii. 21; Gal. v. 1, 13). 4. *The rest which we have from him is consistent with a large measure of holy usefulness.* The children of Israel were to take back with them to their own land these "strangers," who were thenceforth to be their servants instead of their oppressors (vers. 1, 2). So are the children of God, by patient, strenuous activity, to win their adversaries to the faith and love of Christ; to make them possessors of the privileges of the kingdom of God even with themselves, and to secure their active help in the conquests they have still to make.—C.

Vers. 4—23.—*Sin and its humiliations.* This strong, poetical utterance of Isaiah, though primarily directed against one particular city and, probably, one individual king, may convey to us all some serviceable lessons respecting sin generally, and more especially the humiliations which are in its train. We gather therefrom—

I. THAT THE OPPRESSIVENESS OF SIN, THOUGH LONG CONTINUED, WILL CERTAINLY BE BROKEN DOWN. (Vers. 4—7.) Sin is constantly, naturally, oppressive. It grasps at power that it may wield it to its own satisfaction, irrespective of the rights of the weak and the helpless. Often its usurpation, like that of Babylon, is very long continued. The oppressed are weary under their affliction; they cry patiently to Heaven for deliverance and redress; they are sometimes apt to think that they are forgotten by the righteous and merciful One. But they are not unobserved by him (Exod. iii. 7).

He hears their cry; he determines on their relief; at the right moment he intervenes. "The staff of the wicked is broken." "He who smote" is smitten down, and "the whole earth is at rest."

II. THAT SIN MAKES NO TRUE FRIENDS. Adversity is the test of faithfulness. Until the dark hour comes we cannot be quite sure whether our acquaintances are, or are not, our *friends*; then we "know the proof" of them. In the hour of Babylon's discomfiture there would be found "none to hinder" (ver. 6) her destruction. Her allies would fail her then; her dependencies would make no effort to save her; she would be "alone when she fell" (Eccles. iv. 10). The "friends" whom sinners make are not "friends in deed," for they will not prove to be "friends in need." If financial ruin, the loss of his good name, overwhelming bereavement, protracted sickness, the near prospect of death, should overtake a man, it is not to his ungodly companions he would resort, for to them he would look in vain. The man of God will not be without those who will graciously and generously intervene to "hinder" the calamity which impends, to alleviate the sorrows which are wounding the spirit.

III. THAT THE REACH OF SIN, IN ITS EFFECTS, IS EXCEEDINGLY WIDE. (Ver. 8.) The trees of the mountain forest rejoice in the downfall of Babylon. The requirements of that selfish and remorseless power extended even so far as to the cedars of Lebanon. *They* felt the weight of its tyranny, the edge of its exactions. The evil consequences of the unlawful exercise of power are never confined within a narrow compass; they spread far and wide; they reach places, people, generations, which we might have supposed they would not touch. No man who uses his powers wrongfully can calculate how far the evil will extend, or how many will be glad when there is "no more strength in his right hand." The most striking lesson in this vivid and eloquent passage is—

IV. THAT SIN CARRIES SAD HUMILIATIONS IN ITS EVIL TRAIN. (Vers. 9, 19.) The humiliation to which the proud monarch of Babylon is subjected is painted in rich and glowing colours (see Exposition). From the loftiest height of honour he is cast down to the lowest depth of shame; from the softest bed of luxury to the "narrow house of death," where the worm will be his couch and his coverlet (ver. 11). God abases the sinner; to whatever height he climbs, from that summit he must come down to the ground and suffer the painful smart of humiliation. 1. It may be from the point of *impious assumption*. (Vers. 13—15, 18, 19; see Dan. v. 22, 23, 30; Acts xii. 21—23.) 2. It may be from the summit of *human authority and power*. (Vers. 9—12, 16, 17.) 3. It may be from the position of *the common heritage of man*. They who have climbed the highest must fall the furthest, but inasmuch as we have all sinned we must all pay one of the invariable penalties of sin. We cannot continuously ascend, we cannot maintain our position at a certain height. The hour comes when we must decline. Even if there be not for us a sudden and precipitous fall—as to most of the vain-glorious and oppressive there will be—there must come the gradual descent: the fading of faculty, the diminution of strength, the waning of influence, the advance of conscious feebleness, increasing dependence on others, the sick-chamber, death, and the dark, lonely grave. Nothing can save us from this declension, this dishonour. But there are in the gospel of Christ blessed and glorious compensations. Instead of death, is life eternal; instead of humiliation, everlasting glory.—C.

Ver. 20.—*The children of the ungodly; or, parental responsibility.* "The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned." We must not insist on a literal fulfilment of these words. It is not intended that there has never been an instance in which the children of wicked parents have attained to celebrity. Here, as elsewhere, the spirit, not the letter, "giveth life." The ill fortune which attends the sons of the guilty may be regarded as—

I. A DISTINCT, DIVINELY ORDERED PENALTY. Under the old dispensation it certainly was this. That was a dispensation in which temporal rewards and punishments were almost everything; then the spiritual and the eternal were only faintly felt as motives to action. And one of the most potent considerations which could be brought to bear was *the effect of a man's behaviour on the fortunes of his children*; consequently we continually meet with the prospects of "thy seed," for good or for evil, as a powerful incentive to righteousness, or dissuasion from sin. There can hardly be a stronger force than this; where everything else would fail, this might succeed. There is nothing

that reaches us so surely, that moves us so mightily, as an argument in which our children's fortunes are concerned. Whatever "touches them touches the apple of our eye." And here God is saying to those who were showing signs of wandering from his service, "If you fall into great sin and grievous condemnation, you not only do yourselves irreparable wrong, but you involve your children also in misery and shame. The penalty of your guilt will go down to them."

II. THE INEVITABLE RESULT OF RIGHTEOUS LAW. It is likely, in a very high degree, that the children of evil-doers will follow in the steps of their parents, and stoop to the shame to which they fall. All things are against them. 1. They are *without the incentive* which comes from inheriting a good name and the natural desire to perpetuate it. 2. They are *weighted* with the positive and most *serious disadvantage* of bearing a name which is dishonoured. 3. They are *depressed by* a positive and disheartening *sense of shame*, if they have not imbibed the spirit and acquired the habits of their parents. In the latter case (which is by far the worse of the two): 4. They *suffer* in their *character*, and therefore in their career, from the degenerating influences to which they are subjected. And without the preserving and directing principles which make life a true success, impelled by the passions, the prejudices, the ambitions which constitute it a lamentable failure, they do not rise to "renown;" they sink down into disregard, into actual disrepute, into open shame. (1) *This is not positively inevitable.* A determination to pursue a holy course, under the guidance of God, in the service of Jesus Christ, will redeem the unlikeliest life from failure, and lift it up to honour and usefulness. (2) If not for other reasons, then *for the sake of our children*, let us walk in the ways of godliness; for their present and lasting interests are bound up in the choice we make as to the path we will ourselves pursue.—C.

Vers. 24—27.—*Divine purpose and Divine power.* We have our thoughts directed in this passage to—

I. THE DIVINE PURPOSE. "I have thought . . . I have purposed . . . this is the purpose . . . upon the whole earth," etc. God had a special purpose respecting Assyria, and he may have had a distinct purpose in inspiring Isaiah to pronounce at this especial time what it was, viz. that, in the dark days of Babylonian captivity, his people might remember its fulfilment, and be assured of an accomplishment for which they had still to wait. But these expressions suggest to us the existence of Divine purposes in the mind of God, dating from the remote past and stretching on into the far future. God's purposes in regard to his creatures have been or are: 1. *Creative.* In the "far backward and abysm of time" he determined to call worlds, beings, intelligent and immortal spirits, into existence, to be the objects of his thought, care, love; to many of whom he himself should be the Object of worship, affection, service. 2. *Ministrative.* His purpose was that of boundless benefaction—of conferring on multitudes and millions of sentient beings a life of happiness and, to a vast number, that of true dignity and worth. 3. *Punitive.* His purpose has been to punish, never indeed under the impulse of mere resentment, but always in the interests of righteousness and, ultimately, in that of true happiness also. 4. *Restorative.* He has purposed, and does purpose, to restore; either (1) his people to a heritage they have forfeited, or (2) those who have wandered from his service to the spiritual and moral integrity from which they have fallen.

II. THE DIVINE POWER. "So shall it come to pass . . . so shall it stand . . . I will break . . . I will tread under foot . . . This is the hand that is stretched out . . . Who shall disannul . . . who shall turn back" (his hand)? It is true that: 1. God has taken time to effect his purpose; *e.g.* the building of this world for man's residence, the preparation of the world for Christ's coming. 2. God has permitted his rebellious children to lessen the sum of happiness and worth they would otherwise have possessed. 3. God's beneficent design for the redemption of the world by the gospel has been hindered by external opposition and by internal shortcoming. Yet it remains true, and this is the larger as it is the brighter half of the truth, that: (1) God's purpose of *beneficence*, if it can be said to have been checked, has not been defeated: from his strong and bountiful hand he has been bestowing life, joy, blessedness, excellency, which is quite incalculable, which entirely baffles our imagination as it is beyond our reckoning. (2) God's purpose of *punishment* has been and will be fulfilled; witness the Flood, the outcasting of the guilty Canaanites, the destruction of "the cities of the plain," the

decimation of Sennacherib's army and "the breaking of the Assyrian," the extinction of Babylon, etc. And now, though impiety holds up its head for years, and though vice staves off the evil day of disease and death, and though crime long eludes the pursuer, yet the hand of God does come down in retribution; his holy purpose cannot be disannulled. "Let sinners look to it" (see Numb. xxxii. 23; Prov. xi. 21; Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36). 3. God's purpose of *restoration* will one day be accomplished. "*This* is the purpose which is purposed *upon the whole earth*," and "*this* is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations." "*The Lord of hosts* hath purposed." There may be many obstacles in the way. Difficulties may, to the eye of human calculation, seem actually insurmountable; the estimable forces of truth may appear unequal to cope with the overwhelming agencies of error and evil. But this our great hope is not a bold enterprise of man; it is the purpose of the living God, the Lord of hosts. "*His* hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" Let the Christian worshipper offer expectant prayer; let the Christian workman go up to his post with holy confidence; for the purpose of God, though it be long delayed, shall assuredly be fulfilled.—C.

Vers. 29—32.—*A truth, a test, and a solution.* We have here—

I. A TRUTH RESPECTING AN INDIVIDUAL DEATH; viz. that we may hope or may fear too much from the death of one man. Philistia was evidently inclined to hope too much from the death of a Jewish king; another was arising (Hezekiah) who would be to his predecessor what a cockatrice was to a serpent—a still more formidable enemy. (2 Kings xviii. 8). The wicked nation, or the unprincipled party, or the unscrupulous man that indulges a feeling of security because some strong opponent is dead may, probably *will*, find itself (himself) miserably disappointed. The resources of a righteous providence are not exhausted, though a very pillar of justice be fallen. Or, on the other hand, the righteous may fear too much from the death of a powerful friend. Will not the good cause perish now that the tongue of its most able advocate is silent in death? Christianity did not perish with the departure of Christ or with the death of the apostles. The Father of spirits will not let righteousness expire for want of righteous men, whom he can create and endow and send forth into the world.

II. A TEST FOR THE COMMUNITY. Is the nation, is the Church, doing its work, fulfilling its Master's will concerning it? One good, if not faultless, test is found in the answer to the question—*Is it caring for its humblest members?* If nothing better can be said for the nation than that its monarch is living in magnificence, or that its rulers or nobles are possessed of great wealth and rejoicing in splendid luxury, then is that nation rapidly descending to ruin. If nothing better can be said for the Church than that its hierarchy is powerful or its ministers well sustained, then is that Church a long way from its Lord's ideal. It is when it can be said of the one that "the firstborn (the poorest) of the poor feed, and the needy lie down in safety" (ver. 30), and of the other that "the poor of the people trust in it," or "betake themselves unto it" (ver. 32),—it is then that the end of their existence is answered. The "community" exists for "the common people," and especially the Church exists for the "little ones," the poor, the needy, the unbefriended, the young, the dependent.

III. THE SOLUTION OF PROSPERITY. What should be the answer given to the "messengers of the nation" inquiring about the deliverance of Jerusalem? This: "The Lord hath founded Zion" (ver. 32). This is the best account we can give to others, as it is the best we can give to ourselves, of any deliverance or of any prosperity we may be enjoying. To refer it to good fortune is shallow and irreverent. To ascribe it to our own ability or energy, or to that of our friends, is insufficient and, it may be, spiritually harmful. We are safe and wise in attributing it to God (Ps. lxxxvii. 7; lxxxix. 17; cxv. 1; 1 Cor. iv. 7). Our faculties, our resources, our opportunities, are all of him; and from him come the energizing force and the overruling power without which all our efforts must be in vain. The reverent and religious spirit (1) gladly dedicates to the cause of Christ and of his Church all that it can yield, and (2) thankfully refers all prosperity enjoyed to his guiding finger, his protecting power, his life-giving Spirit.—C.

Ver. 1.—*God's mercy may delay, it does not fail.* The captivity in Babylon seems to be in the thought of the prophet, and it would be a long and weary time, during

which the people, even the faithful among the people, might think God had "forgotten to be gracious," or "delayed his coming;" so assurances are given that, however it may please God to tarry, holding back the fulfilment of his promises, they are always "yea and amen," and at the last it will be found that "not one word hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken." The historical connection of the passage is that the fall of Babylon, to which previous reference has been made, was to be designed, overruled, by Jehovah for the fulfilment of his promise and the restoration of his people. God is said to "yet choose Israel," because permitting them to go into captivity was an appearance of having temporarily cast them off. In illustration of the topic suggested by the passage, we note—

I. MERCY CAN PROMISE. Judgment is always blended with mercy. Mercy must get in its gracious and comforting word. Judgment without mercy is only crushing. Mercy holds before us the hope that enables us to endure the judgment, and learn the lessons of it. Show what the Captivity would have been to Israel without the promises, and the hope of return when the judgment had wrought its work.

II. MERCY CAN HOLD BACK FULFILMENT OF PROMISE. Illustrated in the forty years of wandering in the desert: an unexpected holding back, necessitated by the wilfulness and murmuring of the people. Or by David, promised the kingdom, but required to wait for it, even after the death of Saul.

III. MERCY CAN KEEP FIRM TO CONDITIONS OF PROMISE. This is the real reason of the delay. All promises are conditional; and it could be neither wisdom nor kindness on God's part to show indifference to the conditions. Our not meeting conditions is the real reason for prolonged and renewed delays. God never really tarries. His deliverances and benedictions always come at the first possible moment. This may be shown in relation to the Captivity; and the promised Messiah only appeared "when the fulness of time was come."

IV. MERCY CANNOT BE SATISFIED WITHOUT FULFILLING PROMISES AT LAST. We are to think of God's mercy as a most active attribute. It is watching for its opportunity; determined not to be frustrated; working to secure its ends; and, sooner or later, accomplishing its gracious purpose. Mercy will be finally triumphant.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The Lord's rest.* "The Lord shall give thee rest." The word "rest" summarizes God's deliverances, and God's protections, and God's provisions, for his captive people. Assurbanipal boasts that he made his Arabian prisoners carry heavy burdens and build brickwork. And the wearied Hebrews in Egypt were promised the Lord's rest in Canaan. Treating the topic in a comprehensive manner, we may say that the rest which God provides for his creatures must be *like himself*, and it must be *adapted to the deepest and best in them.*

I. WHAT GOD'S REST IS. It must stand related to *character*, not to mere attributes, nor to mere conditions. God must, indeed, be thought of as feeling the differences of outward conditions; the varied states of his creatures do move him to pity, sympathy, anger, or grief. "In all their affliction he is afflicted." But he is always at rest, because the changes in circumstances never imperil the basis-principles of his character. "Justice and judgment are always the habitation of his throne." We are "restless unquiet sprites," as Keble calls us, not because we are in the midst of variable conditions and circumstances, or because these affect our feeling, but because the varying circumstances put in peril the principles of our character. God has eternal rest, because if "the elements melted with fervent heat, the earth and all therein were burned up," God would never question the perfect fairness and righteousness of his rule. Or we may put it in this way. Rest comes from the dominion of one faculty in us; under that dominion all the various powers of our nature fall into order, take their place, keep the peace, and secure for us rest. War may be a thing of the soul as well as of the circumstances, and the inward war consists in the conflict of motives. Mind, and will, and judgment, and affections are out of harmony, and make the war in the soul. But we can conceive of nothing like this in God. He is at rest because in his Divine nature, which is the true after which we are imaged, there is the order and harmony that follow upon the rule of the highest faculty. And what, for God, may we think is the highest faculty? This surely is the fullest revelation of God—"God is love." Ruling love secures rest. And if, for God, the highest is "love," what is

the highest for man? Surely it must be "trust." Then the rest of God is the rest of *character* and of *love*; and the rest for man is the rest of *character* and of *trust*—of that character which grows up out of the root "trust." But, treating the subject in another way, we may see what is involved in saying that God's rest, as provided for man, must be adapted to man, to the deepest and best in him. Rest is the great longing of every heart. All men everywhere have this for their supreme quest. 1. Man, as man, is ever seeking rest. It is his "good time coming." 2. Man, as a sinner, is ever seeking rest. 3. Man, as redeemed, is ever seeking rest. God's rest for man is a glorious whole, beginning within us, in the faith we set on God, spreading through all the forces of our being its hallowing influence, and bringing the quietness and peace of settled, centred character; reaching even to the circumstances in which we are placed, modifying them, bringing them into its obedience, and so growing from the rest of the soul to the sublime, eternal, all-embracing rest of heaven.

II. WHO MAY WIN THE LORD'S REST? It is very easy to say that, since it is the rest of faith, only believers win it. But we have come to talk about "faith" and "believing" in such a way that they are rather magical words to conjure with, than deep, full, rich expressions whose divinest meanings we grasp and use. Are believers only those who accept a particular creed, and have a common intellectual conception of the "plan of salvation"? Or is the true believer the man who possesses the *spirit of trust*; whose heart leans on God; whose loving reliances are on the heavenly Father? Surely the faith that saves is the yielding of the self to God; it is the heart's grasp of the righteousness and mercy which are revealed in Jesus Christ. This we can all win, and this is the Lord's rest.

III. HOW FAR MAY THIS REST BE A PRESENT CONSCIOUS POSSESSION? It is a mistaken notion that all the facts and processes of the religious life must come into conscious recognition. Our Lord taught us that the growth of souls was like that of the plants. It goes on secretly, no man knoweth how; no man can trace all the processes of change from seed to blade, from blade to ear, from ear to full corn in the ear. Rest may be ours, and we may not think about it. It will never be won merely by seeking for it. It will be won by doing our duty, by simple obedience, by living in the grace of Christ, by perseverance in well-doing, by "holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and it will be plain to *others* that you have reached the Lord's rest; and it may be that sometimes the joy of that rest will come into your own consciousness, and you will feel that "peace passing understanding" which is the foretaste of the "sweet rest of heaven."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God's judgments on other nations than our own.* The "burdens" are given as a series of prophetic visions; events pass before the prophet's mind as in a moving panorama, and he notes down just the things that more particularly arrested his attention. A prophetical description of an event will differ from an historical account of the same event, by being a bare outline, or else a vigorous word-painting of certain salient features, rather than a circumstantial detail. Prophetical work is akin to poetical work, and its due apprehension depends on spiritual sympathy rather than on logical precision. The passage commencing with ver. 4 is perhaps the most striking passage in this series of burdens. It is an ode of triumph on the fall of the Babylonian monarch. Bishop Lowth says of it that he "knows not a single instance, in the whole compass of Greek and Roman poetry, which in every excellence of composition can be said to equal or even approach it. It may with truth be affirmed that there is no poem of its kind extant in any language, in which the subject is so well laid out, and so happily conducted, with such variety of images, persons, and distinct actions, with such rapidity and ease of transition, in so small a compass, as in this ode of Isaiah. For beauty of disposition, strength of colouring, greatness of sentiment, brevity, perspicuity, and force of expression, it stands among all the monuments of antiquity unrivalled." Babylon may be treated as a representative of all the nations surrounding and related to Israel. They are the great nations of the ancient world, but they fringed round the land of Canaan on the north, the east, and the south. The prophet denounces Babylon, and Moab, and Syria, and Egypt, and Tyre, and solemnly warns Edom.

I. AS NEIGHBOURING NATIONS, THEIR PROPHESIED DESOLATION BECAME A POWER ON THE JEW. At the time that Isaiah wrote his first prophecy the nation of Israel was in a perilous and painful position. The consequences of prolonged national self-will and idolatry were pressing heavily upon it. The great Asiatic nation, which was to be the Divine agent in their punishment, was coming nearer and nearer to them, swallowing up, in its irresistible progress, the intervening kingdoms. The northern portion, that called Israel in distinction from Judah, was about this time subdued by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, and its people were carried away captive. The kings of Judah only secured a temporary respite by paying a heavy tribute, and the one or two good kings of the period, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, did but, as it were, make the dying taper flare up for a while ere it suddenly went out in darkness. It must have been a hard thing for a godly man to live in such a time, and in the midst of such surroundings. We can imagine the pious Jew in such an age saying, "Are we not the covenant people of God? Have we not been, through long years, the special objects of his guidance, defence, and care? Yet it seems now as if God had forgotten us. These surrounding nations are in the height of prosperity. See Babylon the magnificent! See Damascus the wealthy! See Tyre the commercial!" To such as these, in Jerusalem and in Judæa, the prophecies of Isaiah, charged with the "burdens" of these prosperous nations, would come as a Divine consolation, and would say to them, "Do not confine your thoughts to that only which you can at present see; take in the future; view things in the larger light of him who has all men and nations in his control, and the long ages in which to work his purposes." Isaiah shows them that sin is sin everywhere, it carries its tremendous consequences everywhere. Delays are, everywhere, but the long-suffering patience of God that loudly calls to repentance. For the unrepentant everywhere—call him Gentile or call him Jew, be he covenanted or be he uncovenanted—there is only a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." But these prophecies were intended to be a power upon the many as well as upon the few. The many were heedless and blind, puffed up with their apparent security. For long years the warnings of their earlier national history had been neglected. In their self-security they had even ceased to fear the "Judge of all the earth." To them there came the voice as of a man rapt in sublime vision: "I see the burden of Babylon. Exalted to heaven in privilege; thrust down to hell in disgrace, I see the place of Babylon. Behold, it is not: the hand of the Lord hath swept it away." "Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand: it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."

II. AS GREAT AND PROMINENT NATIONS, GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THEM CARRY LESSONS FOR ALL AFTER GENERATIONS. In order to reach us with helpful moral influences, God finds it necessary to set the little matters concerning the progress of our little life in *large before us* in the histories of nations. A nation is, as it were, a man whose entire life-course can be watched through from childhood to decay. The invisible things of morals may be made manifest in the visible scenes of history. An old divine has the following remark: "God can punish nations in this world, but for the punishment of individuals he wants both this world and the next." We live such brief lives here on earth that we cannot get extensive and worthy ideas of the issues of sin from studying merely our own experiences. Nor can we, even from the most striking cases of individual suffering, as a result of sin, discern the full majesty of the Divine indignation. But the life of a nation can be set forth in its completeness; it is a finished whole. We can read the story of Babylon and Tyre, from cradle to grave. The life of a nation is long enough for us to trace in its history its growth, its sin, its fall, and its woe. And the calamities that come at last upon sinful nations are figured in such aspects of terror as to create the profoundest impression on us. This may be illustrated by the Persian overthrow of Babylon, or the Roman siege of Jerusalem, or the manifest decay of the Turkish empire in our own times. 1. From this subject we learn to have faith in God about the nations of the earth. God has set England in the very midst of the world-kingdoms, very much as he set old Canaan in the centre of the great ancient empires, on purpose that we might be a gracious power on them, and learn wise lessons from them. God is painting truth for us in his dealings with them. And God's ways, whether in the small for individuals, or in the large for nations, are ways of *chastisement*, are instinct with love; are intended to do them good

in their latter end. So we may have faith in God concerning the nations of the earth. 2. And we learn to have faith in God about a true and godly life. If we only see lives in the little, as Asaph did, who wailed out the seventy-third psalm, we may easily be bewildered. But see lives in the large, in the mass, and then we are assured that iniquity never flourishes through; at the last it always "biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Many a man dies without the suffering and punishment exhausting itself. But a nation never dies without the sin-degradations and the sin-judgments being plain to view upon it. It is true, for ever true, that "righteousness tendeth unto life." Sin is simply a tremendous, awful burden, more than any man can bear, such as no man can bear away. Kept, it must crush unto wounding and woe. Somehow, somewhere, outside ourselves, we must *find a sin-bearer*, who can carry our sin away.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The Hebrew conception of Sheôl.* Henderson says, "In this verse the state of the dead is represented as thrown into great agitation, on its being announced that the mighty King of Babylon is about to enter. Personages of the same rank, as the fittest to conduct the ceremony of his reception, and the most likely to sympathize with him, are selected to present themselves and address him on the occasion. They rise from their thrones of state on which they had been sitting—perpetuating in mock majesty the pageant which they had exhibited while on earth." "*Sheôl* is here used collectively of the entire population of shades. The word means first a grave, or individual sepulchre, and then the grave as a general receptacle, indiscriminately occupied by all the dead without respect to character." In its further signification it means the abode of disembodied souls, and these are regarded poetically as retaining not only a form, but a position also, analogous to that which they had on earth. It is an interesting and important, though a difficult question, how far we may regard Holy Scripture as coloured by the common conceptions of a future state in ancient times. We need not regard such conceptions as true, because they belonged rather to the imaginations of men than to the revelations of God. The subject may profitably be discussed under the following headings; but little or no treatment is suggested, because different conclusions are reached by different schools of theologians.

I. On the nature and occupations of the future state, or condition of the dead, no precise revelations were made in olden times.

II. Men seem to have been left to fashion the future by their own imaginations. The general line of thought seems to have been started by Egyptian notions concerning the dead; but each nation put its characteristic seal upon its eschatology.

III. There is a very real sense in which "life and immortality have been brought to light" by Jesus Christ.

IV. But the light he sheds falls rather on the character of the future than on the form of it. He meets all that man actually requires to know; he satisfies man in nothing that he too curiously seeks to know. The essence of Christ's revelation of the future is, that moral goodness is crowned with everlasting blessedness.—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The ambitious spirit in man.* The word "Lucifer" means the "light-bringer," and so has been in modern times associated with our matches. As standing in this text, it has often been taken as a synonym for Satan; but it really is a highly poetical description of the King of Babylon, and the Babylonian empire is in Scripture represented as the type of the ambitions, aspiring, tyrannical, and self-idolizing power. Ver. 13 gives the supreme boasting of this king: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." "Babylon had shone forth in the dawn of the world's history with surprising lustre, but was perverted by self-admiration." It should be remembered that the ancient Oriental notion was that kings were incarnations of the Divine, and everything was done to sustain this sentiment. We have evidence of this as regards Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia. Such a sentiment must have fostered national ambition to an extravagant height. Treating the King of Babylon as a type, we consider the general subject of the "ambitious spirit in man," observing—

I. THAT IT IS THE SPRING OF ENTERPRISE. The true spring of human enterprise should be loyalty and devotion to God. Next to that we place supreme desire for the well-being of others, the "enthusiasm of humanity." But these have been made to

give place, and self-interests have fashioned the ambitions which have inspired men to heroic and persevering deeds, in all the various spheres of life. Illustrate, from commerce, science, travel, literature, and extension of kingdoms. Ambition has been the source of achievement and the spirit of progress. It may be shown how far it has thus proved an element in the well-being of the race. Without ambition the world could never have been won for man.

II. IT IS ALSO A CONDITION OF INDIVIDUAL GROWTH. Without it a man remains in the educational and intellectual range of his class, and the social sphere in which he was born. Illustrate from the farm-labourer, who, through a long life, plods on his simple way, attaining nothing, because utterly lacking the inspiration of ambition. The spread of education is chiefly important for this—it shows higher levels, and starts ambition. A man ceases to grow when he ceases to aspire. And the infinite perfection of God is the sublime height set before us. We may all grow on until we have become like him.

III. IT IS THE SPIRIT IN MAN TO WHICH RELIGION APPEALS. Religion finds it crushed down into hopelessness, and it touches it, quickening it into new vigour and hope. Religion finds it diverted to base and merely self-seeking ends, and it brings it back to the right lines, and makes it noble and self-denying. Man, made in the image of God, and made for God, must want to reach God. Religion sets God before him—so attractively in the person of the Lord Jesus—that the ambitions are drawn in, and become one supreme ambition to be worthy sons and devoted servants of the Lord God Almighty. The Christian ought to be the most ambitious of all men. A Christian without his sacred ambitions does no honour to his name.

IV. IT IS THE SPIRIT IN MAN WHICH MUST BE KEPT UNDER STRICT LIMITATIONS. Because ambition so soon and so easily gets beyond self-control—the control of the sanctified self—and becomes self-willed, self-seeking; a mere striving to attain, whether God will have us attain or not. Then ambition is like that of the King of Babylon, and it must bring us under Divine arrestings, checkings, and judgments. The law of limitation is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." There is no fear for the influence of any ambitions that come *after* this first and supreme one. The sin and folly of men's usual ambitions lie in their putting God last. It is with them "all of self, and none of thee."—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Children suffering for the fathers.* The idea finding poetical expression here is, that the judgments of God necessarily fall on the *last* members—the children—of a corrupt and wicked dynasty. It is in the public and open administrations of providence, it is in the events and circumstances and history of this world, and not in the secret dealings of God with each individual soul, that the law of this text applies. For the sake of moral influence upon the whole race, children are seen to suffer for their parents' wrong-doing. But no children can bear, before God, the burden of their parents' guilt. The law of the children suffering, generation after generation, belongs to the solidarity of the race. But that is a purely *material* conception. Souls are individual, and every soul must bear entirely its own burden. It may share, it can share, no one else's. "So, then, each one of us must give account of himself to God." This truth may be fully illustrated along the following line.

I. CHILDREN SUFFERING FOR THE FATHERS IS A PHYSICAL LAW. Much has recently been discovered concerning the law of heredity, but only the fringe of a great subject has yet been touched. No greater calamity rests on men than the bodily bias and tendency given by diseased or degraded parentage. The familiar illustration is drunkenness; the fact equally applies to other sins.

II. CHILDREN SUFFERING FOR THE FATHERS IS A MORAL CONDITION. That is, as an established and recognized fact it is designed to be a moral power on parents. It is a persuasion to righteousness for the children's sake. No higher moral force on affectionate natures can be provided than this consideration, "You physically injure those whom you love best, if you are self-indulgent."

III. CHILDREN SUFFERING FOR THE FATHERS IS A DIVINE JUDGMENT. Striking men in one of their tenderest places. Men would bear an extreme of suffering, if they might bear it all themselves; but it is terrible to think that they drag their children under, and the weight will crush them. Only let us see quite clearly, that it is the

disability and the *suffering* of sin, but not the *guilt* of it, which thus passes from generation to generation.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*The security of the Divine Word.* Cheyne translates, "Sworn has Jehovah Sabaoth, saying, Surely, according as I have planned, so shall it be; and according as I have purposed, that shall stand." God here declares that it is his fixed and unalterable purpose to destroy Assyria. And who can stop the fulfilment of the Divine Word? In answer to this question, we say—

I. CAN NATURAL FORCES? No, for that was settled when the Red Sea parted asunder, and made a highway for God's people.

II. CAN NATURAL EVENTS? No, for that was settled in the wilderness. Such commonplace things as murmurings and rebellions could destroy a particular generation, but could not keep Israel out of Canaan.

III. CAN INDIVIDUAL MEN? No, for that was settled in Nebuchadnezzar, who had to learn, by humiliation, that God's will would have to be done.

IV. CAN COMBINED MAN? No, for that was settled when the kings of Canaan joined to oppose God's advancing hosts, and were swept away before them, like a summer cloud before the sun.

Nobody and nothing can stop the fulfilment of God's Word. We may go with it, the flood will carry us with it, like helpless logs, if we struggle to oppose. But the Word and will of God are always righteous, beneficent, and good; so it is well that they should abide.—R. T.

Ver. 32.—*Zion a safety for the poor.* Take Zion as a type of Christ's Church in all the ages. It should be a shelter for the poor in the following five senses which may be attached to the word.

I. In the sense of the *ignorant.*

II. In the sense of the *meek.*

III. In the sense of the *young.*

IV. In the sense of the *persecuted.*

V. In the sense of the *doubting.*

Every age is, in one form or another, a troublous age for all earnest souls. The Church is ever the abiding earth-shelter, type and suggestion of that soul-rest in God which the poor—in every sense—may always find.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XV.

Vers. 1—9.—THE BURDEN OF MOAB. The present chapter and the next are very closely connected, and may be regarded as together constituting "the burden of Moab." It has been argued on critical grounds that the bulk of the prophecy is quoted by Isaiah from an earlier writer, and that he has merely modified the wording and added a few touches here and there (so Gesenius, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Maurer, Ewald, Knobel, and Cheyne). Jeremiah is thought to have also based his "judgment of Moab" (Jer. xlviii.) on the same early writing. But speculations of this kind are in the highest degree uncertain, and moreover lead to no results of the slightest importance. It is best, therefore, to regard Isaiah as the author of these two chapters. Having threatened Philistia, Israel's nearest enemy upon the west, he turns to Moab, her nearest foe towards the east.

Ver. 1.—**Because.** An elliptical beginning. Mr. Cheyne supposes some such words as "Lament for Moab," or "Alas for Moab!" to have been in the writer's mind, but to have been omitted through "lyrical excitement." **In the night.** This is best taken literally. Night attacks, though not common in antiquity, were not unknown. Mesha, King of Moab, boasts that he "went in the night" against Nebo, and assaulted it at early dawn (Moabite Stone, l. 15). **Ar of Moab**; or, *Ar-Moab.* An ancient city, mentioned among those taken from the Moabites by Sihon (Numb. xxi. 28). According to Jerome, it was called in Roman times Areopolis, or Rabbath-Moab. Modern geographers identify it with *Rabba*, a place on the old Roman road between *Kerak* and *Arair*, south of the Arnon, where there are

some ancient remains, though they are not very extensive (Burckhardt, 'Travels,' p. 377). **Is laid waste, and brought to silence**; rather, *is stormed, is ruined*. **Kir of Moab.** "Kir of Moab" is reasonably identified with *Kerak*, a place very strongly situated on a mountain peak, about ten miles from the south-eastern corner of the Dead Sea.

Ver. 2.—**He is gone to Bajith**; rather, *he is gone to the temple*. Probably the temple of **Baal** at Beth-baal-meon is intended. Beth-baal-meon is mentioned in close connection with Dibon in Josh. xiii. 17. **And to Dibon.** Dibon is mentioned in Numb. xxi. 30; xxxii. 3, 34; Josh. xiii. 9, 17; Jer. xlviii. 18, 22. It was an ancient Moabite town of considerable importance, and has recently been identified with the site called *Dîbân*, where the Moabite Stone was found. This place is situated in the country east of the Dead Sea, about three miles north of the river Arnon, on the old Roman road connecting Rabbath-Moab with Heshbon. The town seems to have gained in importance from the fact that it was the birthplace of Chemosh-Gad, Mesha's father (Moabite Stone, l. 2). Mesha added to its territory (ibid., l. 21). It is extremely probable that it was the site of one of the Moabite "high places," and was therefore naturally one of the places whereto the Moabites, when afflicted, went up "to weep." **Over Nebo, and over Medeba.** Nebo and Medeba were also ancient Moabite towns. Nebo is mentioned in Numb. xxxii. 3, 38; xxxiii. 47; 1 Chron. v. 8; Jer. xlviii. 1, 22. It seems to have lain almost midway between Beth-baal-meon (*Main*) and Medeba, about three or four miles south-east of Heshbon. Medeba obtains notice in Numb. xxi. 30; Josh. xiii. 9, 16; 1 Chron. xix. 7. Mesha says that it was taken from the Moabites by Omri, King of Israel, but recovered by himself at the end of forty years (Moabite Stone, ll. 7—9). It lay south-east of Heshbon, at the spot which still retains the old name—*Mâdeba*. It has been suggested that there was at Nebo a shrine of the Babylonian god so named; but this is to assume a resemblance which the facts at present known do not indicate, between the Moabite and Babylonian religions. **On all their heads** shall be **baldness**. The practice of cutting off the hair in mourning was common to the Jews (ch. xxii. 12; Micah i. 16) with various other nations; *e.g.* the Persians (Herod., ix. 24), the Greeks, the Macedonians (Plut., 'Vit. Pelop.,' § 34), the primitive Arabs (Krehl, 'Religion der vorislamit. Araber,' p. 33, note 1), and the North American Indians (Bancroft. 'Native Races of America'). It was probably intended, like lacerations, and ashes on the head, as a mere disfigurement.

Ver. 3.—**In their streets**; literally, *in his streets*; i.e. the streets of Moab. **They shall gird themselves with sackcloth.** Another widely spread custom, known to the Assyrians (Jonah iii. 5), the Syrians (1 Kings xx. 31), the Persians (Esth. iv. 1, 2), the Israelites (Neh. ix. 1), and, as we see here, to the Moabites. The modern wearing of black garments, especially crape, is representative of the old practice. **Every one shall howl.** "Howling" remains one of the chief tokens of mourning in the East. It was a practice of the Egyptians (Herod., ii. 79), of the Persians (ibid., viii. 99; ix. 24), of the Babylonians (Jer. li. 8), and probably of the Orientals generally. **Weeping abundantly**; or, *running down with tears* (comp. Jer. ix. 18; xiii. 17; Herod., viii. 99).

Ver. 4.—**Heshbon shall cry.** Heshbon, now *Hesbân*, lay about twenty miles east of the Jordan, nearly on the parallel of its embouchure into the Dead Sea. It was the capital city of Sihon (Numb. xxi. 21), who took it from the Moabites. On the partition of Palestine among the tribes of Israel, it was assigned to Reuben (Numb. xxxii. 37; Josh. xiii. 17); but at a later time we find it reckoned to Gad (1 Chron. vi. 81). We do not know at what time Moab recovered Heshbon, but may conjecture that it was one of the conquests of Mesha, though it is not mentioned on the Moabite Stone. **And Elealeh.** Elealeh is commonly united with Heshbon (Numb. xxxii. 3, 37; ch. xvi. 9; Jer. xlviii. 34). It is probably identical with the modern *El-A'al*, a ruined town on the top of a rounded hill, little more than a mile north of *Hesbân*. Even **unto Jahaz.** Jahaz lay considerably to the south of Heshbon, probably not very far north of the Arnon. It must have been in the vicinity of Dibon, since Mesha, on taking it from the Israelites, annexed it to the territory of that city (Moabite Stone, ll. 19—21). It was the scene of the great battle between Sihon and the Israelites under Moses (Numb. xxi. 23). **His life shall be grievous unto him**; rather, *his soul shall be grieved within him*. The Moabite people is personified (Cheyne).

Ver. 5.—**My heart shall cry out for Moab** (comp. ch. xvi. 9, 11). The prophet sympathizes with the sufferings of Moab, as a kindred people (Gen. xix. 37), and perhaps as having, in the person of Ruth, furnished an ancestress to the Messiah (Matt. i. 5). **His fugitives**; literally, *her fugitives*. The *country* is here personified, instead of the *people*, the former being feminine, the latter masculine. **Shall flee unto Zoar.** Zoar, the "little" town, spared for Lot's sake (Gen. xix. 20—22), is placed by some at the northern, by others at the southern, extremity of the Dead Sea. The present passage makes in favour of the more southern site.

An heifer of three years old. Those who defend this rendering refer the simile either to Zoar, or to Moab, or to the fugitives. Having regard to the parallel passage of Jeremiah (xlviii. 34), we may pronounce the last explanation to be the best. The resemblance to the heifer will consist in the cries uttered. To many critics, however, this idea appears harsh, and the alternative is proposed of regarding *Eglath*—the word translated "heifer"—as a place, and the epithet, "of three years old," as really meaning "the third." Attempts are made to show the existence of three Eglaths in these parts; but they are not very successful; nor is any instance adduced of a city being distinguished from others of the same name by a numerical suffix. The rendering of the Authorized Version may therefore stand, the comparison being regarded as one of the fugitive Moabites to a heifer in its third year, "rushing along with loud, hopeless bellowings" (Kay). **By the mounting up of Luhith.** This ascent has not been identified. It should have been on the way from Moab proper to Zoar. **The way of Horonaim.** On the Moabite Stone Horonaim is mentioned as a town of the Edomites attacked and taken by Mesha (ll. 31—33). It lay probably south or south-east of the Dead Sea. The Moabites, flying from their invaders, seek a refuge in the territories of Edom and Judah, weeping and wailing as they go.

Ver. 6.—**The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate.** The Wady Numeira is a water-course running into the Dead Sea from the east, half-way between the promontory called the "Lisan" and the sea's southern extremity. It is fed by "six or seven springs" ('Quarterly Statement' of Palest. Expl. Fund, October, 1880, p. 254)—"plenteous brooks gushing from the lofty hills" (Tristram), and boasts along its banks a number of "well-watered gardens." There is no reason to doubt the identity of this stream with "the waters of Nimrim." Their "desolation" was probably caused by the enemy stopping up the sources (2 Kings iii. 19, 25; 2 Chron. xxxii. 3, 4). **The hay is withered away.** There is luxuriant vegetation in the wadys and ghors at the southern end of the Dead Sea, especially in the Ghores-Safiyeh, the Wady Numeira, and the Wady el-Mantara ('Quarterly Statement' of Palest. Expl. Fund, October, 1880, pp. 252, 254).

Ver. 7.—**The abundance, etc.**; *i.e.* "the property which they have been able to save and carry off with them." This, finding no place of refuge in their own territory, they convey to their southern border, where "the brook of the willows" separates their country from Edom, with the intention, no doubt, of transporting it across the brook.

Ver. 8.—**Eglaim ... Beer-Elim.** Unknown sites on the borders of Moab, both probably towards the south. The enemy has come in from the north, and has driven the population southwards. A hope has been entertained of the pursuit slackening; but it is disappointed. **The enemy causes grief and "howling" in every part of the territory.**

Ver. 9.—**The waters of Dimon.** It is thought that "Dimon" is here put for "Dibon," in order to assimilate the sound to that of *dam*, blood. St. Jerome says that in his day the place was called indifferently by either name. If we accept this view, "the waters of Dimon" will probably be those of the Arnon, near which Dibon was situated (see the comment on ver. 2). **I will bring more**; literally, *I will bring additions*; i.e. additional calamities, which will cause the stream of the Arnon to flow with blood. **Lions**; or, *a lion*. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. iv. 7), who is said by Josephus to have conquered the Moabites, or possibly Asshur-bani-pal, who overran the country about B.C. 645 (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' p. 259).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 5.—*Denunciations of God's wrath upon sinners compatible with the deepest pity for them.* It is sometimes assumed that those who exert themselves earnestly to set before men the severer aspects of religion, who, like Paul before Felix, "reason of righteousness, temperance, and *judgment to come*" (Acts xxiv. 25), must be persons of harsh, stern, and pitiless tempers, devoid of the gentler feelings, or at any rate without keen sympathy with their fellow-men. The advocates of universal salvation claim to be more tender-hearted than their opponents, and brand the latter with epithets denoting a want of humanity and kindliness. But true tenderness and kindness will not lead men to conceal unpleasant truths, but to state them with the utmost clearness and distinctness—to press them upon men, insist upon them, compel attention to them. Their outspokenness is no sign of want of sympathy, but rather an indication of the contrary. It springs from the deepest love, from the most earnest desire to save souls. Three great examples may be alleged in proof of this.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF ISAIAH. Nowhere do we find more unreserved denunciations of God's wrath against sinners than in the writings of "the evangelical prophet." All the enemies of God are in their turn arraigned, condemned, and sentenced to the severest sufferings. But can it be said that Isaiah is cold, or harsh, or unsympathetic? No. Far otherwise. His "heart cries out for Moab" (ch. xv. 5). He "bewails with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah" (ch. xvi. 9); he "waters Heshbon and Elealeh with his tears" (ch. xvi. 9); his "bowels sound like an harp for Moab," and his "inward parts for Kir-Haresh" (ch. xvi. 11). Nor is it only the kindred nation of Moab which draws forth such feelings. A vision of the siege of Babylon causes him to cry out, "Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth; I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me" (ch. xxi. 3, 4).

II. THE EXAMPLE OF ST. PAUL. No sacred writer is more direct in his warnings against sin, or more plain in his denunciations of eternal death to sinners, than St. Paul. "As many as have sinned without Law shall also *perish* without Law: and as many as have sinned in the Law shall be *judged* by the Law" (Rom. ii. 12). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things *shall not inherit* the kingdom of God" (Gal. v. 19—21). Yet what writer shows greater tenderness towards those whom he warns, or a more affectionate concern for them, than the great apostle of the Gentiles? "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. x. 1). "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsfolk according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 1—3).

III. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD. The tenderness of Christ is without a parallel in the history of man. Not only did he die for men, but throughout his life he showed at every turn a love for them surpassing human love. For their sake becoming poor and despised, for their sake unwearied in works of mercy, moved with compassion if he saw them faint or weary, grieving bitterly, even weeping, when he found them impenitent, never breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax, on his way to his death of shame praying for his murderers, it is yet he who delivers the warnings concerning final judgment, which are most awful and most impossible to explain away. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. vii. 19). "As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xiii. 40—42). "Then shall he say to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. xxv. 41, 46). "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 43, 44).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Oracle concerning Moab.* I. HISTORY OF MOAB. Zoar was the cradle of the race, the house of the tribal father Lot. While the brother-tribe of Ammon wandered to the pastures of the north-east, Moab remained nearer the original seat. They were confined to a narrower district by the invasion of the Amorites (Numb. xxi. 26—30; Deut. ii. 10, 11). Their long feud with the tribe of Benjamin lasted to the time of Saul. But in the Book of Ruth we have a pleasant glimpse of the intercourse between the people of Moab and those of Judah; and David, by descent from

Ruth, had Moabite blood in his veins. Eglaim, a Moabite king, had reigned at Jericho; but a fearful war, the last of David's, had crushed, almost extirpated, Moab (2 Sam. viii.; 1 Chron. xviii.). On the division of the kingdom, Moab fell under the dominion of Israel, and paid its kings an enormous tribute (2 Kings iii. 21). On the death of Ahab this tribute was refused, and Moab, in alliance with the Ammonites and others, attacked the kingdom of Judah (2 Chron. xx.). A fearful disaster followed, and Israel, Judah, and Edom united in an attack upon the Moabites, who, deceived by a stratagem, were overcome with fearful carnage. And then, to crown these horrors, the king Mesha, having retreated to the strong place of Kir-Hareseth, was seen by the host of Israel sacrificing his own son upon the walls, as an extreme measure, with a view to obtain deliverance from the gods of the land. From that time we know little of the fortunes of Moab until the date of this prophecy, about a century and a half later, B.C. 726. She had regained the lost ground, and was settled in the territory north of the Arnon, when this disaster overtook her. Ewald thinks that three prophets were concerned in this prophecy, and that it is preserved in Jer. xlviii. more nearly in its original form.

II. THE PATHOS OF MOAB'S FATE. The whole description is characterized by a tone of deep sympathy. The prophet's heart is torn by sorrow and compassion; it melts with tenderness. The mood is elegiac rather than prophetic. The fragment is unique among the elder prophets; even in Hosea there is nothing quite like it (Ewald). "In a night 'Ar-Moab is laid waste, destroyed; for in a night Kir-Moab is laid waste, destroyed." Perhaps the ruins of the capital and the fortress may be identified by antiquarians; perhaps not. But what is more important to us to notice is the *pathos of ruined cities*. What are they but the speaking symbols of man's efforts and man's failures, his soaring ambition, his profound disappointment and humiliation? So the poet in our own time amidst the colossal ruins of Egypt: "I surveyed the generations of man from Rameses the Great and Memnon the beautiful, to the solitary pilgrim whose presence now violated the sanctity of those gorgeous sepulchres. And I found that the history of my race was but one tale of rapid destruction and gradual decay. And in the anguish of my heart I lifted up my hands to the blue ether, and I said, 'Is there no hope? What is knowledge and what is truth? How shall I gain wisdom?'" (Disraeli). A city is to the passionate fancy of prophet and poet as a living person, a woman glorious in her beauty, and extorting tears from the onlooker in her fall. He sees the people going up to the central temple of the land, not to rejoice, but to weep. Every head is bald, and every beard is torn in sign of mourning for the departed. Figures move about in the market-places, not in holiday attire, but in sackcloth; on the roofs and in the streets universal wailing is heard, and there is beheld as it were a deluge of tears. The hill Heshbon cries, and Elealeh returns a hollow sound, and from far-off Jahaz an echo comes. The heroes' hearts are paralyzed; they cry out with the women in helpless lamentation. The very heart of the land trembles; it is an earthquake of woe. In sudden calamities, the sudden deaths of individuals, the sudden fall of cities, there is an expression of the mystery of destiny which overwhelms the soul. Goethe, after describing the awful earthquake of Lisbon in 1755, which "spread a vast horror over a world already accustomed to peace and rest," speaks of his own feelings as a boy on hearing the details often repeated. "He was no little moved. God the Creator and Upholder of heaven and earth, whom the explanation of the first article of belief represented as so wise and generous, had, in dealing out like destruction to the just and the unjust, by no means acted as a father. In vain his young spirit strove to recover from these impressions; and it was the less possible, because the wise men and the doctors could not agree on the manner in which the phenomenon should be viewed." Without attempting to unravel the tragic enigmas of existence, it may be well to note how deep is the abyss of thought and passion in our own hearts opened by the tale of such horrors; and thus to learn something of that Divine sympathy which broods over nature and over men, and to be reminded of those tears shed over Jerusalem, already seen by Jesus in the lurid light of its approaching doom.

III. THE SYMPATHY OF THE PROPHET. It is expressed in appropriate figures. His heart cries out with passionate yearning towards Moab. The city of Zoar seems to him as a heifer of three years old, in all the unexhausted fulness of its strength. This is an image of a fair and fertile land, applied also to Egypt and to Babylon (Jer. xlvi. 20, xlviii. 34; l. 11; cf. Hos. iv. 16; x. 11). The roads are filled with fugitives, weeping

and raising the cries of death and despair. At Nimrim, the "fair waters," the springs have been filled up with rubbish, and will probably be a waste for ever. The greenness of the spot has vanished beneath the hand of the conqueror, and the fugitives, with their savings and stores, are seen hurrying across the brook of the willows into the territory of Edom. From south to north, from Eglaim to Beer-Elim, there is wailing, there is wailing! Dimon or Dibon's (perhaps the Arnon) waters are full of blood. And yet a further perspective of evil opens. A lion is to be brought upon the fugitives and the survivors; probably Judah, as this animal was Judah's tribal ensign (Gen. xlix. 9). But we must be content to leave the passage obscure.

IV. MUSINGS AMONG THE RUINS OF MOAB. The land has been but seldom visited by Europeans, and their descriptions vary; but all agree in stating that the country is covered with an extraordinary number of ruins. Of the language we do not know very much, but the Moabite Stone shows that it was closely akin to Hebrew. Of the religion we know still less. Of what nature was their great god Chemosh, whose worship Solomon introduced into and Josiah expelled from Judah? Here almost all is conjectural, and imagination has free course and unchecked play amidst the ruins of Moab. The ruins are *symbolic of human greatness, of human diseases and decay.*

> "All things have their end;
> Temples and cities, which have diseases like to man,
> Must have like death that we have."

The mouldering stones sermonize with silent eloquence on the old text, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." They remind us of man's *short life and long hopes.* He builds for a thousand years, though he may have but as many months to live. Thus, bearing their witness to the aspiration for immortality, the passion to create the beautiful that shall not die, venerable ruins of remote antiquity have a lofty spiritual expression.

> "There is given
> Unto the things of earth, which time hath bent,
> A spirit's feeling; and where he hath leant
> His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
> And magic in the ruined battlement,
> For which the palace of the present hour
> Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower."

They remind us, by contrast of *that which falls not into ruin*—the edifice of God in the human spirit; the shrine not to be found on the mounts of Moab or of Judah; the living altar on which the fire goes not out from age to age; the element in life which abides for ever, when this world and the lust thereof hath passed away.—J.

Vers. 1—9.—*National distress.* In these very vigorous touches we have—

I. A FINE BUT FEARFUL PICTURE OF NATIONAL DISTRESS. We see two of the principal cities attacked, unexpectedly, in the night, taken by assault and ravaged with the merciless cruelties of ancient war (ver. 1); we see the inhabitants flocking to their national temples to weep, "with lamentable voice," over their humiliation; we see them resorting to the last indignities, self-inflicted, in order to express more forcibly than words can do the extremity of their woe (ver. 2); we see them neglecting their daily labour and going up to their house-tops, there to pour forth their loud laments (ver. 3); we see the very army dispossessed of its manliness and weeping like a company of women (ver. 4); we see fugitives hastening into exile with bitter cries, more resembling the lowing of the kine for their calves than the voice of man or woman (ver. 5); we see the land afflicted with drought and white with famine (ver. 6); we see those who had wealth to lose stealing away with their precious things, hoping they may secrete and save them (ver. 7); we see the waters of the land red with the blood of her slaughtered sons and daughters (ver. 9); and in the background, where we might hope to find some break in the blackness of the vision, we see the wild beasts that haunt the depopulated land hungry for their prey (ver. 9).

II. AN INTIMATION OF COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. It cannot be doubted that this fearful fate was a judgment from Heaven, otherwise it would not have been thus foretold by the mouth of God's prophet. Moab was to be brought low, to be wasted, to be

terribly afflicted because it was guilty, because the nation had incurred the condemnation of God. In the first instance, individual souls are responsible for their thoughts, words, lives. But responsibility does not end here; it extends to the family, to the Church, to the society, to the island population, to the great kingdom or empire. For the action which it takes, for the influence it exerts, for the principles on which it is shaping its course and living its life, God holds it responsible, and he will reward or punish it some day according to his judgment concerning it. There is no community too small to be disregarded by him; none too large to be beyond the exercise of his righteous government.

III. AN INFERENCE AS TO PRIVILEGE AND GUILT. Moab stood outside the circle of sacred privilege. God had not been speaking daily, weekly, monthly, annually, by priest and rite, by prophet and prophecy, to her. Yet was she held responsible for her sin and punished for her transgressions. If the unprivileged Moab was thus accountable, how much more the people to whom were committed the oracles of God, and in the midst of whom dwelt the Most High himself? And how much more yet those peoples of the earth to whom has been vouchsafed the gospel of the Son of God? "For if the word spoken by angels," etc. (Heb. ii. 2, 3); and "if he that despised Moses' Law," etc. (Heb. x. 28, 29). Moab "sinned without Law" and perished (Rom. ii. 12). Israel "sinned in the Law" and "was judged by the Law," and was condemned (Rom. ii. 12). If England sins under the gospel, she will be judged by the righteous principle, that "from them to whom much is given men expect the more," and from them God requires the more. It *must* be that the brighter the light of privilege and opportunity, the deeper the shadow of disobedience and condemnation. 1. Realize the responsibility that devolves upon citizenship, upon membership of a society or of the Church, and use all the power that can be exercised upon the community to preserve it from wrong courses, to incite it to wise and worthy measures. 2. Remember that the larger and also the smaller communities rest upon the basis of *the family* and, ultimately, *the individual*. Let every man see that God is honoured in his own home and in his own heart, and then will the *rectitude* and thus the *prosperity* of the whole Church, of the entire kingdom, be assured.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Moab a national type.* Of late years attention has been directed to Moab, through the discovery of what is known as the Moabite Stone, which contains the earliest inscription we have wholly in alphabetical characters. This stone was found at *Diban*, about three miles north of the central part of the Arnon. Its inscription remarkably confirms the Scripture record. The original territory of Moab seems to have been divided into three portions: 1. What was known as the "land of Moab"—the open rolling country north of the Arnon, opposite Jericho, reaching to Gilead on the north. 2. The "field of Moab"—upland undulating plains, extending from the precipitous mountains overlooking the Arabah and the Dead Sea on the west, to the Arabian desert on the east; from the deep chasm of the Arnon on the north, to Edom on the south. 3. The "Arboth-Moab," or dry tropical regions in the Arabah on the east of the Jordan. The peculiarity of Moab, so far as indicated, seems to have been that for many years it had been undisturbed and prosperous, not affected by invasions or famines; and so, lacking experiences of calamity and suffering, social and moral evils had so grown that at last terrible and almost overwhelming Divine chastisements seemed necessary; and these would cause unusual grief and distress. The Prophet Jeremiah indicates the special characteristic of Moab in a very striking passage (xlviii. 11): "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." A contrast is suggested between the national experiences of Israel and of Moab. Israel had known no easy restful periods in her history; she had been "shaken loose or unsettled every few years by some great change or adversity—by a state of slavery in Egypt, by a forty years' roving and fighting in the wilderness, by a time of dreadful anarchy under the judges, by a revolt and separation of the kingdom, and then by a captivity. Moab had been at ease from the first, shaken by no great overturnings or defeats, humbled and broken by no captivities, ventilated by no surprising changes or adversities. He has lived on, from age to age, in comparative security, settled on his

lees; and therefore he has made no improvement" (Bushnell). Moab is thus a type of those nations that have long periods of peace and prosperity, and of those families and individuals who have for years few experiences of trouble. From Moab, as a type, we may learn such lessons as these.

I. GOD IS IN OUR TIMES OF RESTFULNESS AND EASE. It is a fact of common human experience that our relations with God are recognized in our times of trouble, but lost sight of in our times of prosperity. It is woe to us when all men speak well of us, and it is woe to us when all things go well with us. Nothing so easily hides God from our view as success attending our own self-endeavours. And yet God is in our times of prosperity, as truly sending them, presiding over them, and working his purpose through them, as he is sending and using times of suffering. No truth needs more constant and varied reassertion than this—God is in prosperity and success.

II. SUCH TIMES OF RESTFULNESS AND EASE ARE SEARCHING TESTS OF CHARACTER. The common sentiment is that troubles alone test us. The truth is, that removal of trouble tests; that holding off of trouble tests; and that bestowments and benedictions test. These, indeed, become most searching tests, under which many of us utterly fail after coming well through our times of tribulation. What is thought of as the inequality of life—the disproportionate allotment of joy and sorrow, success and failure—finds a partial explanation, if we apprehend that a man's success and ease are his moral testings, and that, before God, thousands more fail under life's prosperities than fail under life's adversities. Man, looking at Israel and at Moab, would at once say that Moab, in his quietness, was the best off. The issue plainly shows that the lot of Israel was the more desirable.

III. SUCH TIMES OF RESTFULNESS AND EASE DEVELOP PARTICULAR FORMS OF EVIL. Not the same forms that are developed by adversities, but more subtle and more vital evils. All those which come out of centering thought on *self*—involving heart-separation from God; self-conceit; contempt of others; over-estimate of the material and temporal; luxury of self-indulgence; and those aggravated and degrading forms of immorality which attend unchecked civilization and over-swift development of wealth. We know the moral evils of war-times; we fail to estimate the more pervading moral evils of peace-times.

IV. SUCH EVILS, SOONER OR LATER, BRING ON SPECIAL DIVINE JUDGMENTS. As with Moab. When the judgment comes, it needs to be so severe as to seem a gathering up of all the testing sufferings of years. And though it is still only chastisement, it takes a form that looks like overwhelming judgment. In this chapter the prophet seems to be amazed at the terrible character of the Divine judgment on Moab when it did fall.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*National distress.* The particular trouble causing such extreme grief was the destruction of the two chief cities of Moab, *Ar* and *Kir*. To destroy the capital of a kingdom is to strike the nation at its very heart. Conquerors can dictate peace when the chief city lies at their mercy. Illustrate from the recent German siege of Paris. This chapter vigorously pictures the distress throughout the land when Ar was taken, the rush of people to the border districts, the alarm of those whose property was imperilled, the wail of those who had lost their friends in the strife. Howling, weeping, plucking off the hair, covering with sackcloth, and other signs of despairing grief, were found everywhere; and the cries were all the more bitter because for so many generations Moab had dwelt secure. Here one kind of national distress brings before us that general subject, and sets upon considering—

II. ITS BEARING ON THE POOR. They are always the first to suffer from political or international conditions which affect manufacture, trade, or agriculture. Living upon daily wage, and, when thrifty, only able to provide in limited degrees for depressed times, the poor are most dependent on the preservation of peace, security, order, and mutual confidence. Demagogues urge the poor to a disturbance of social relations, with the promise of material advantage. In the interests of the poor themselves we plead that war, disturbance, revolutionary change, never even temporarily serve their interest. So grievous is the effect of political convulsions on the poor, that no class of the community should more intensely demand the knitting of land to land by commerce and brotherhood, and the correction of social and political evils by

processes which do not disturb the sense of national security. Of the poor the words may well be used, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

II. ITS BEARING ON THE RICH. They are always the aim of attack in lawless times, whether the evil come through aggressive enemies outside the nation, or through turbulent people inside the nation. The one wants "booty," and the other wants excuse for robbery. The rich need national security (1) for the retention of what they have; (2) for the increase of what they have; (3) and for the enjoyment of what they have. National distress becomes especially afflictive to the rich, because by training and association they are unfitted for self-help when their riches are taken away.

III. ITS MISSION AS SENT BY GOD. It is often that which we find illustrated in the case of Moab. National distress, circumstances that unite the whole land in a common grief, and in a common sense of helplessness, is the Divine corrective of the evils which attend prolonged peace, security, and luxury. Those evils may be traced: 1. In the sphere of men's *thought*. The material is exaggerated, the unseen and spiritual are at disadvantage, and cannot hold their due place and proportion. 2. In the sphere of *social life*. In prolonged times of peace and prosperity, the separations between classes of society are grievously widened, and there grows up a painful contrast between the few who are unduly rich and the many who are miserably poor. National distress brings rich and poor together, in mutual dependence and service. 3. In the spheres of *religion*. Like the voyager, men can easily dismiss the thought of God when, for long times together, seas are calm and heavens are clear; but when the skies are black, and the wild waves shake the frail ship, and fear whitens every face, the soul begins to cry for a sight of God and a touch of his protecting hand. We are with God as our little children are with their mothers. They run about and play, taking little heed of her, until the head aches, and the pulse is high, and pain wearies; and then there is nobody in all the world will do but their mother. National distress brings nations back to the thought and love of God. The atheist, the agnostic, and the secularist have their chance when the sun shines; nobody wants such vain helpers when the tempests rage. Then nobody will do but the God of our fathers.

IV. ITS SHAME, IF CAUSED BY MAN'S WILFULNESS OR MAN'S NEGLECT. And these are too often the immediate causes of national distress. War is almost always the issue of somebody's wilfulness or masterfulness. Nobody would need to go to war if they did not hanker after something to which they had no right, or were not compelled to resist these envious, masterful folk. And such distresses as come by prevailing disease are usually traceable to men's neglectings of social and family and household duty. God makes even man's errors and sins serve his purpose, but he never ceases to declare woe unto him by whom the offence cometh.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Divine judgments in precise adaptations.* The point which arrests attention here is that Moab, being so largely a sheep-feeding country, was dependent on its pastures, and these were dependent on the dews, and rains, and fountains, and streams. To a grazing country no greater calamity, no more precisely adapted calamity, could come than is described in this verse: "The waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing." Possibly the mischief was wrought in part by the malicious act of the invaders in stopping the wells and defiling the streams. If one thing more than another is impressed on devout minds by a review of life, it is the marvellous way in which Divine wisdom has found the best, most adapted forms for judgment and chastisement to take. Chastisement sent by the Divine Father is always precisely corrective of the evil which has called for it, and always precisely corrective to the individual and to the particular nation. This general subject may be opened out thus—

I. DIVINE JUDGMENTS HAVE PRECISE AIMS. The aim expressed in general terms is—humiliation with a view to exaltation.

II. DIVINE JUDGMENTS ARE DIRECTED TO SECURE THOSE AIMS. And this decides the form and the degree of the humiliation that is found to be necessary.

III. DIVINE JUDGMENTS ARE ADAPTED IN WAYS THAT MAY ESCAPE PRESENT NOTICE. And this occasions some of the gravest perplexities, and sternest struggles of life.

IV. THE ADAPTATION OF ALL DIVINE JUDGMENTS, TO THE SECURING OF THEIR PRECISE AIMS, WILL BE THE DELIGHTFUL DISCOVERY OF THE FUTURE. It will be our

reading of our own history, and of the world's history, when we have learned how to read aright.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The insecurity of worldly possessions.* The picture is a striking one. In the national fright, the people are seen picking up what they can of their treasures, and escaping for life to the border districts; learning the lesson that "riches take to themselves wings, and flee away." The word "abundance," in the text, should be replaced by the word "remainder;" and the most probable meaning of the verse is that the Moabites shall carry what they can save of their possessions into the land of Edom. The picture suggests two topics.

I. THE INSECURITY OF THE MAN WHO IS RICH IN WHAT HE HAS. Illustrate from riches (1) in land; (2) in money; (3) in houses; (4) in goods. How dependent he is on a thousand things for the retention and use of all! The lesson of Job is that no form of earthly possession can possibly be secure. Land is unlet; money cannot be profitably exchanged; houses get out of repair, and eat up rentals; and goods deteriorate in the warehouses. When ordinary forces leave our property alone, the heavens can send fire; the earth can heave and quake; and by mysterious influences we can be made to learn our lesson, that "this is not our rest."

II. THE SECURITY OF THE MAN WHO IS RICH IN WHAT HE IS. No human and no supernatural forces, here or hereafter, can deprive a man of his possessions in what he *is*. Character, piety, are beyond reach of moth, or worm, or rust, or storm, or earthquake, or death. It is said of knowledge that a man "only possesses what he understands." It might be said of a man's wealth that he "only *has* what he *is*." When calamities come, the man of character never has to gather his treasures hurriedly together and make off for the border-land. Wherever he is, he has his riches with him. Stripped of all his so-called wealth, he is not deprived of one grain. He holds it all, and his riches none can take away. The Lord Jesus men called poor. He was the only truly and perfectly rich man that ever lived; and such as he was we would desire to be.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVI.

Vers. 1—14.—THE BURDEN OF MOAB (CONTINUED). This portion of the "burden" is divided into three sections. In section 1 (from ver. 1 to the end of ver. 5) an offer of mercy is made to Moab on certain conditions, viz. that she return to her allegiance to the house of David, and show kindness to fugitive Israelites. In section 2 (vers. 6—12) she is supposed to have rejected this offer, and is threatened (as in ch. xv.) with severe punishment. In section 3 (which consists of vers. 13 and 14) the time is fixed for the main visitation to fall upon her.

Ver. 1.—Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land; rather, *the lamb of the ruler of the land*—the lamb (or lambs, *kar* being used collectively) due to the ruler as a mark of subjection. In the time of Ahab Mesha had paid a tribute to Israel of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams annually (2 Kings iii. 4). The prophet recommends that this, or some similar, tribute should now be paid to the King of Judah instead, Israel having been absorbed into Assyria. **From Sela.** Either Moab is regarded as having taken refuge in Edom, and is therefore bidden to send her tribute from the Edomite capital, Sela (equivalent to "Petra"), or "Sela," here is not a proper name, but a collective used to designate the rocky parts of Moab, to which she had betaken herself (as in Jer. xlviii. 28). The latter supposition is, on the whole, the more probable. **To the wilderness;** literally, *wildernesswards;* i.e. by the way of the wilderness. The enemy being regarded as in possession of the northern end of the Dead Sea, Moab is recommended to send her tribute round the southern end, and so by way of "the wilderness of Judah," to Jerusalem.

Ver. 2.—**For it shall be;** rather, *and it shall be.* The tribute having been paid, Moab will regain some confidence. Her fluttered population will return, and collect at the fords of the Arnon, ready to recross it. **As a wandering bird cast out of the nest;** rather, *as a wandering bird* (or, *wandering birds*)—"as a scattered nest" (or, "brood of nestlings"). **The daughters of Moab.** The population of Moab generally, as "the daughter of Zion" (ver. 1) is the population of Jerusalem generally.

Ver. 3.—Take counsel, execute judgment, etc. According to most critics, these are the words of the Moabites, or of a Moabite ambassador at Jerusalem, and are a call on Judæa to give shelter to the fugitives from Moab. Some, however, as Dr. Kay, maintain that the words are the prophet's, addressed to Moab, calling on her to treat kindly fugitives from Judæa. **Make thy shadow as the night** (comp. ch. iv. 6). In the hot land of Moab the sun is an enemy, and "the shadow of a great rock" a welcome refuge.

Ver. 4.—**Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab.** The change of one accent will allow of this passage being translated, *Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee;* and so it is rendered by the LXX., the Syriac, by Lowth, Gesenius, Hitzig, Ewald, and Mr. Cheyne. Delitzsch and Dr. Kay agree with the Authorized Version. **For the extortioner is at an end.** This seems to be urged as a reason why the protection asked should be given: it will not be for long—the oppressor is about to receive chastisement. He is called "the extortioner," as exacting the utmost possible tribute from conquered lands. Such exaction was characteristic of Assyria (2 Kings xv. 19; xviii. 14; 'Assyrian Inscriptions,' *passim*). **The spoiler ceaseth;** literally, *devastation ceaseth.*

Ver. 5.—**And in mercy shall the throne be established;** rather, *and there shall be a throne established in mercy.* A Messianic vision comes upon the prophet in connection with the disappearance of the oppressor. There shall be one day—he knows not how soon or how late—a throne established in mercy, and "One shall be seated upon it in truth, who shall occupy the tent [or, 'house'] of David, as one who judges, and seeks justice, and hastens on [the reign of] righteousness."

Ver. 6.—**We have heard of the pride of Moab.** A new section commences. Moab has not accepted the offer of mercy made in vers. 1—5, and is therefore denounced afresh. Her "pride" prevented her from renewing her subjection to the house of David, and therefore it is her pride which is specially condemned. **His lies shall not be so;** rather, *of no worth are his boastings.* The result will not correspond with them.

Ver. 7.—**Every one shall howl;** rather, *the whole of it shall howl;* i.e. the entire nation collectively (comp. Herod., viii. 99; ix. 24). **For the foundations of Kir-Hareseth shall ye mourn.** The word here translated "foundations" is elsewhere always rendered "flagons" or "flagons of wine" (2 Sam. vi. 19; Cant. ii. 5; Hos. iii. 1). And this rendering is more agreeable to the context than "foundations," since it is the loss of the products of the soil which is threatened in the next three verses. "Kir-Hareseth" is probably the same place as the "Kir-Moab" of ch. xv. 1. It was one of the principal cities of Moab (see 2 Kings iii. 25).

Ver. 8.—**The fields of Heshbon** (see the comment on ch. xv. 4). The whole of the Mishor, or Belka, on the edge of which *Hesbán* stands, is cultivable and capable of producing good crops. The Moabites stored water in reservoirs (Cant. vii. 4), and made their country a garden. **The vine of Sibmah.** "Sibmah" is mentioned in Numb. xxxii. 8 and Josh. xiii. 19 among the towns of the Reubenites. According to Jerome ('Comment. in Esaiam'), it was less than half a mile distant from Heshbon. Jeremiah follows Isaiah in lamenting the destruction of its vines (Jer. xlviii. 32). **The lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof.** "The lords of the heathen" are probably the Assyrians, who made a practice of destroying the fruit trees in an enemy's country, for the mere purpose of doing mischief ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 84). It is wanton to discard this very satisfactory sense for the strange one that "the choice plants have broken down—*i.e.* made drunk—the lords of the heathen" (Cheyne). The rendering of the Authorized Version is supported by Gesenius, Ewald, Rosenmüller, Meier, and Dr. Kay. **They are come even unto Jazer;** rather, *they (the vines) reached to Jazer;* i.e. the vine of Sibmah was cultivated as far as Jazer. Jazer lay about twelve miles north of Heshbon, in the territory of Gad (Numb. xxxii. 35). It is probably identified with *Es Szir*, which is in the required position, and retains a trace of the name (Seetzen, 'Reisen,' vol. i. pp. 397, 398). **They wandered through the wilderness;** rather, *they strayed into the wilderness;* i.e. the cultivation was pushed eastward into the actual *midbar*, or desert. **Her branches are stretched out;** or, *her offshoots are spread abroad;* i.e. the young shoots or slips are taken by the cultivators and spread further and further. They are even carried across the Dead Sea, and planted on its western shore. Mr. Cheyne supposes the prophet to refer to the "vineyards of En-gedi" (Cant. i. 14).

Ver. 9.—**Therefore I will bewail** (comp. ch. xv. 5, and see the Homiletics on that verse). **With the weeping of Jazer.** "With tears as genuine as Jazer's own" (Kay). **O Heshbon and Elealeh** (on the close connection of these two cities, see the comment on ch. xv. 4). **For the shouting,** etc.; rather, *for on thy summer fruits and on thy harvest a shouting is fallen.* The "shouting" intended is that of the invading

enemy, which replaces the ordinary joy-song of the vintagers (see ver. 10).

Ver. 10.—**The plentiful field**; Hebrew, *Carmel*. The word *carmel* seems to designate "garden," or "orchard ground" generally, without reference to the degree of fertility. It is generally rendered by our translators "fruitful field," which is right, if we regard "fruitful" as equivalent to "fruit-producing." **No singing . . . no shouting.** Those who have heard the vintage-songs in the north of Italy and elsewhere will appreciate the sadness of this silence. **The treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses.** Wine-presses were in or near the vineyards. They consisted of two vats, or two reservoirs cut in the rock, one above the other, with a passage of communication between them. The grapes were placed in the upper vat or reservoir, and were crushed by the naked feet of the vintagers. Sometimes as many as seven persons "trod the wine-press" together (Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. i. p. 45). It was usual for them to sing as they trod (Jer. xxv. 30; xlviii. 33). **I have made their vintage shouting to cease.** The prophet is the mouthpiece of God. Accidentally, as it were, he here betrays the personality which is behind him. It is not he, but God, who has caused the invasion which has reduced the vintagers to silence.

Ver. 11.—**My bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab**; *i.e.* they shall vibrate with thrills of grief (Kay).

Ver. 12.—**When it is seen that Moab is weary**; rather, *when Moab shows himself, and has wearied himself*. The heathen "thought to be heard for their much speaking" (Matt. vi. 7). They endeavoured to weary their gods into granting their prayers (1 Kings xviii. 26), and frequently succeeded in wearying themselves. **On the high place.** "High places" (*bamôth*) were common to the Moabites, with the other nations of Syria and Palestine. Mesha, in his inscription, speaks of having rebuilt a city called "Beth-Bamôth" (l. 27), which must have been a "city of high places;" and he even calls the *stélé* which he dedicates to Chemosh, whereon his inscription is written, a *bamah*, or "high place." **That he shall come to his sanctuary . . . but he shall not**, etc.; rather, *and has come into his sanctuary, that he shall not prevail*.

Ver. 13.—**This is the word**, etc. The third and concluding section begins here. This prophecy, Isaiah says, is one, not now delivered for the first time, but existent previously. How long previously, he leaves quite vague.

Ver. 14.—**But now.** "Now"—an addition has been made to the prophecy. Isaiah is authorized to announce that in three years' time, counted as strictly as possible, the judgment pronounced shall fall on Moab; her "glory" shall be turned into shame, her "multitude" shall be cut off, and only a "remnant" shall be left, weak, small, and powerless. **As the years of an hireling.** Counted with the utmost exactness. A hireling would not consent to serve a day longer than his contract bound him, nor would his master consent that he should serve a day short of it. **With all that great multitude.** We have no means of accurately estimating the population of Moab. The entire area of the region which the Moabites inhabited seems to have been not more than fifteen hundred square miles. The greater part of it was, however, exceedingly fertile; and we are, perhaps, justified in allowing it a population of two hundred to the square mile, which is about that of Germany. This would give three hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom the adult males would be seventy-five thousand. **Feeble**; literally, *not powerful*; i.e. very much the contrary, very weak. Moab seems to have offered a very slight resistance to Asshur-bani-pal (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' p. 259).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*God's offer of mercy to the sinner.* Scarcely ever does God punish sin by a sudden unannounced visitation, or without previous warning to the sinner of what is coming upon him. And this warning is almost always accompanied by an offer of mercy. God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xviii. 32); he "would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). And therefore he warns men. He warned even the ungodly world before the Flood by the preaching of Noah; he warned the Ninevites by Jonah; he now warned the Moabites by Isaiah; he warned the Jews of later times by John the Baptist, by his Son, by the apostles. And all equally in vain. How often do we not see in cases of this kind—

I. THE OFFER MADE. Sometimes by an inward awakening of the conscience, more often by preaching or teaching from without, the sinner is startled, alarmed, made to see his sin and feel his danger. Mercy is offered to him, if he will repent and amend;

a course of conduct is placed before him by which he may recover himself. But the course is unpleasing; it involves pain and trouble. Pride has to be humbled in the dust, confession and restitution have to be made, pet sins have to be surrendered, self-denial has to be attempted, often the whole course of the life hitherto lived has to be altered, and a new departure made from a new beginning. To the natural man this seems hard, as to Moab the resumption of a tributary position; it seems intolerable, impossible, not to be thought of. And, after a longer or a shorter struggle, the second stage is reached—

II. THE OFFER SPURNED. The sinner desires mercy and forgiveness, but he will not consent to pay the price. Immediate suffering, though not of any great severity, seems harder to bear than the prospect of future intense suffering. Or perhaps he flatters himself that the future suffering may be escaped. He thinks that he may repent later; or he doubts whether God will punish so severely as he has threatened; or he even doubts whether there is any God at all. On one ground or another he spurns the offer made him—puts it aside, ceases to think of it, practically rejects it. And then comes the final result—

III. THE SPURNING OF THE OFFER PUNISHED. Punishment may be in this life or in the next. That of nations must be in this life; that of individuals may be in either, or in both. Usually—it is in both. Our sin finds us out. Unpleasant physical consequences follow upon most sinful indulgences. Others bring loss of character and of men's respect. Others, again, lead to poverty and earthly ruin. All are liable to be followed by never-ending regret and remorse, feelings as painful as any known to man. Further, the consciousness of ill desert cannot but arouse a fear of judgment to come—a fear which, as death approaches, becomes often a constant agonizing dread. To all this has to be added the punishment that in another world awaits those who have spurned God's offers in this—punishment shadowed out to us in Scripture under the images of the "undying worm," and the "fire that never shall be quenched." It is surely worth while for sinners to ask themselves whether the enjoyment which they derive from their sins is really of sufficient value to them to compensate for all this weight of after suffering. Would they not act more prudently, as well as more virtuously, if they accepted God's offer of mercy as soon as it is placed before them, and forsook their sins at once, and repented and turned to God?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The King in Zion.* "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. ii.). The destined Ruler of the world, he shall spread the wing of his mild government and protection over the nations in their harassment and despair, as now over Moab.

I. THE CALL TO THE FUGITIVES. They have fled into Edom, as far as to Petra, near Mount Hor. It was a region surrounded by rocky cliffs. Sela itself means rock or cliff. Between Petra—whose ruins the Arab guide of Seetzen said he must weep over every time he saw them—and Jerusalem lies a desert, through which the tribute flocks must pass. 1. *Demand of tribute.* "Send ye the lambs of the prince of the land from Sela desert-wards to the mount of the daughter of Zion." In former days Mesha, the King of Moab, was said to be a "sheep-master," and he rendered a yearly tribute of a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool, to the King of Israel till the death of Ahab (2 Kings iii. 4). What was then sent to Samaria must now be sent to Jerusalem. Under the form of this demand is signified an appeal to the people of Moab to submit to the house of David as their only hope of safety. Spiritually, the appeal may be construed as the call to nations and to men to submit to the spiritual rule of the Messiah, as anointed King and Saviour of the world. 2. *Effect of the summons.* The "daughters" of Moab, *i.e.* its cities and villages, are seen in commotion. They flutter about, like birds driven from their nests, at the fords of the Arnon, Moab's chief river. The first effect of the "long-drawn trumpet blast" is fear and agitation. The name of Judah is a spell of terror; the hand of Jehovah is felt to be held out and to be shaken in menace over the nations, and they become like women (cf. ch. xix. 16). He demands of their flocks and their merchandise. Will they

obey? In obedience only will be their salvation. Will these trembling fugitives, seeking escape on the banks of Arnon, hear the timely voice of counsel? How readily do these historical pictures suggest a spiritual application! The first impression of the Divine voice is that of fear; next there is hesitation; next the critical choice, acceptance of the Divine offers, or recalcitration and refusal. The merciful God, the Saviour of men, would gather us fugitives from the world's troubles to his arms. Shall we run to him as a strong Tower and be safe, or seek by perilous paths another course, only to rush upon fresh woes? "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

II. THE REPLY OF MOAB. 1. *They appeal to Zion for counsel and arbitrament.* The powerful neighbour and suzerain is asked to intervene between the contending parties as an umpire, so that the unjustly oppressed may be succoured. And here is *a sublime image of the Judge and Protector.* May he be "a shadow like night at high noon." In our cold northern clime our poets chiefly borrow images from the wintry season to represent distress. We speak of the wintry frost of calamity, the cruel wind, the snows of adversity, etc. Not so the Hebrew; to him the hot season is typical of all that is most cruel in physical or mental suffering. Hence, by opposition, the shadow of the great rock, or the shadow deep as night, remind of all that is most grateful in deliverance and repose. Of a great man it is proverbially said, in the East, "Like the sun, he warmed in the cold, and when Sirius shone, then was he coolness and shade." And in the Sunna seven classes of good men are enumerated, whom "the Lord will overshadow with his shade, when no shade will be like his" (cf. ch. xxx. 2, 3; xxxii. 2). So may the outcasts be hidden, the wanderers faithfully protected, and Zion throw her ægis over the land of Moab, and guard it from the spoiler. 2. *They extol the government of Judah.* "Oppression has ceased, the spoiling is at end, the tormentors have vanished from the land." We see what good administration is in the light of the bitter experience of tyranny and its attendant evils. Notice the strong images of harsh rule: *pressure,* applied so as to press out the marrow from the bones of the people, as it were; *preying* and *spoiling* (cf. ch. x. 6); *trampling* and *treading down* of the multitude of the poor. These tyrants exhibit all "the proud man's scorn, the oppressor's contumely." Iniquity is their pastime, their game. They "watch for it, they lay snares and gins for good men, as the hunter does for wild beasts. The liberty of speech is denied, and men are made offenders for a word" (ch. xxix. 20, 21). They are faithless to the faithful, they break treaties, they despise cities, they regard no man (ch. xxxi. 1, 8). Nature seems to mourn beneath the infliction, and society and commerce languish. The highways are deserted of the merchant and the traveller. The glories of Lebanon, the loveliness of Sharon, the fruitful glades of Bashan and Carmel, are dishonoured, and seen to weep in sympathy with man. Is there a more odious offence on God's earth than the tyrant—than despotism and all its horrible selfishness? "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless myriads mourn." But these things have passed, are passing, or shall pass away. A new era dawns with the establishment of the *throne of David.* This throne is symbolic of: (1) *Grace,* or *graciousness.* The word stands for all that is good in principle, benevolent in purpose, benign and healing in administrative effort. No king truly rules except *Dei gratiâ,* by the favour of God, nor is kingly unless he illustrates the benignant spirit of the Divine rule. (2) *Faithfulness,* or *truth.* He is the extreme opposite to those treacherous covenant-breakers, who have made tyranny odious and contemptible. His words are kingly because true, and the expression of a truthful character. The character of the liar and the hypocrite sullies the crown more than any blot. (3) *Justice.* "A judge both seeking right and expert in justice." A burning zeal in his temper for the right, and the habit of making it prevail. Such are the signs of Messianic times—the dawn of God's kingdom upon earth. The tent of David which had fallen and been ruined is indeed raised up again, and built as in the days of old (Amos ix. 11). And it shelters a king in whom the ideal of Jehovah is realized.

III. REBUKE OF MOAB. It seems best to take what follows as the utterance of the prophet, pursuing the thread of meditation. We have heard what Moab might have said, and should have said; but alas! her accustomed pride and haughtiness will be her bane. Her insolence and insincerity are also stigmatized, as in Jer. xlviii. 30, 31, "I know his wrath, saith the Lord; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not effect it. Therefore I will howl for Moab, and will cry out for all Moab; my heart shall mourn

for the men of Kir-Heres." Some take the words as given from the throne in reply. "If Moab continues to show so little penitence, it cannot be assisted; and therefore the prophet, however it grieves him, must leave Moab to her further chastisements" (Ewald). It seems intended that we should look upon Moab's language here as insincere, and therefore unacceptable. We may remind ourselves of the spiritual lesson, "God draws near to the lowly, but recognizes the proud afar off." It is pride which keeps us aloof from blessings that might be had by stooping; it is pride which makes us blind to opportunity, insensible to the bitter lessons of experience, and lays us open to further chastisements.—J.

Vers. 7—14.—*Lament over Moab.* I. MOAB'S SELF-LAMENTATION. "Moab will wail for Moab; everything will wail." In her misery and distress, she reflects on her beauty. A fair land is like a fair maiden, and her desolation excites the like poignant self-pity. "I know not a greater grief," said Dante, "than to recall the happy time in the midst of distress." *The picture of Moab's former happiness.* The vineyard and all its gladdening associations represent the endearing charms of the land. These are no more to be enjoyed in the smitten and drooping fields of Kir-Hareseth and Heshbon. Once a splendid vine threw its noble branches and its trailing shoots far over the borders of the land to the north, to Jazer, near the Dead Sea. The lords of the heathen have beaten it down.

II. THE PROPHET'S SYMPATHY WITH THE LAMENT. He, too, will bewail the noble vine of Sibmah; he will water Heshbon and Elealeh with his tears, as he thinks of the wild *uproar* that fell upon the midst of the harvest of fruit and corn. In the irony of grief he uses a figure of speech very expressive. The *hēdad* was the shout raised by the treaders of the grapes. It was a mighty heaven-rending cry, giving forth in full volume the joy and thankfulness of the rustic heart of the tillers (cf. Jer. xxv. 30). There was another shout of different import, one that fell like a knell upon the ear—the yell of a swarming host of invaders, of Jer. li. 14, bursting in upon the summer fruits and the vintage (Jer. xlviii. 32). Then, instead of the rich flow of the trodden grape, there will be "the red rain that makes the battle-harvest grow." *The silence of desolation succeeds to the sounds of rejoicing.* There is a silence "more dreadful than severest sounds." It is the silence of scenes once thronged with life, and resounding with cheerful songs and cries. The prophet, as he muses, finds

> "Remembrance wake with all her busy train,
> Swell at his heart and turn the past to pain."

Joy and exultation is withdrawn from the fruit-fields, and in the vineyards there is no jubilation or shouting; no treader treads wine in the presses, and the shout of the vintagers is at end.

> "The sounds of population fail;
> No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale. . . .
> Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
> Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
> And desolation saddens all thy green."

The prophet's inmost heart is touched, his feelings vibrate like the strings of a harp at the sound of Moab's woes. In like manner Jeremiah compares his heart to the flute. The poet and the prophet are indeed organs of the world's sorrows. And indeed these sorrows turn to music even at the worst, when interpreted by the heart of him who is in sympathy with the universal and eternal love. They are "tears most sacred" which are "shed for others' pain," and athwart them the rainbow of hope seldom fails to glimmer. So here.

III. A GLIMPSE OF HOPE. He sorrows over Moab, because Moab does not know the living God. But "when Moab, in the pressure of the further calamities of the future, again appears, as now in his idol-temple, or wearies himself, vainly wringing his hands, and in utter despair, then he will be ashamed of his god Chemosh, and learn true humility in Jehovah." So Ewald, who thinks that the last words, necessary to complete the sense, have been lost. Like the priests of Baal calling upon their god from morning to noon, and saying, "O Baal, hear us!" and when there was no voice, nor any

that answered, leaping upon the altar, crying and gashing themselves with knives, so will the Moabites, in the extremity of their despair, appeal to Chemosh. What is more sad in the life of superstition than this passionate resort to any means, however irrational, to wring a favour from the deities of special shrines and sanctuaries? As if the true help were not ever near; as if, that being neglected, there could be hope elsewhere! Calvin observes, "While idolaters have their ordinary temples and places of worship, if any uncommon calamity befalls them, they go to another temple more sacred than the rest, expecting that there they will be more abundantly favoured with the presence of their god. In like manner, the Papists of the present day, when they are reduced to any uncommon danger (for this fault has existed in all ages), think that they will more readily obtain their wish by running to St. Claude, or to Mary of Loretto, or to any other celebrated idol, than if they assembled in some neighbouring church. They resolve that their extraordinary prayers shall be offered up in a church at a great distance. It is in this sense that the prophet applies the term *sanctuary* to that most highly celebrated among the Moabites, and says they will go to it without any advantage." One cannot help thinking of those melancholy pilgrimages to Lourdes, that focus of superstition in our own times. So do men continue to hew out to themselves cisterns that hold no water; and so necessary still is the living word of prophecy, to remind the world that only in a genuine spiritual relation to the Eternal, only in a faith and worship which is independent of place, because ever fixed in the heart, can true comfort and help be found.

IV. RATIFICATION OF THE PROPHECY. It is the word spoken long ago by Jehovah concerning Moab. And now he speaks to solemn effect, that in three years, like the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab will be disgraced, together with all the multitude of the great; only a very small remnant will be left. The days or years of the day-labourer or hireling, are those strictly measured, neither more nor less (so in ch. xxi. 16; cf. xx. 3). "Of working time the hirer remits nothing, and the labourer gives nothing in." The statement is to be taken in its exactness. As the labourer knows that his time is appointed, and may look for an end of his toil when the shadow comes (Job vii. 1, 2), as life itself must surely come to its close (Job xiv. 6), so with the long-suffering of God, so with the iniquity of nations and men, so with every abuse and oppression; nay, so with every nation and institution.

"They have their day and cease to be;
But thou, O Lord, art more than they."

"After the lapse of almost three thousand years," says Barnes, "every successive traveller who visits Moab, Idumæa, or Palestine, does something to confirm the accuracy of Isaiah. Towns bearing the same name, or the ruins of towns, are located in the same relative position he said they were; and the ruins of once splendid cities, broken columns, dilapidated walls, trodden-down vineyards, half-demolished temples, and fragments broken and consumed by time, proclaim to the world that those cities are what he said they would be, and that he was under the inspiration of God." And how powerfully come back to us from such scenes those "truths which wake, to perish never!" Amidst the gloom the word of prophecy shines as a light in a dark place. Its voice prevails over time; imparts warmth to the heart amidst the rigours of Providence; calls to mind with its persuasive strain long-slighted truths; teaches that while

"Trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,
As oceans sweep the labour'd mole away,"

the state or the individual that is possessed of moral strength may be blessed in poverty; that there is a good which is not dependent on the fertility of a land, or the strength of its fortresses—which will survive the desolation of its fields, the downfall of its kings, the overthrow of its idols.—J.

Ver. 10.—*A harvest failure.* "I have made their vintage shouting to cease." Why? Because the harvest *is fallen*. In the vineyards there is no shouting, for all the fruits are blighted and withered. Thus is it with every harvest which is evil. Men expect much, and lo! it often comes to nothing. The glory departs if God is forgotten.

I. WE LIVE FOR THE FUTURE. Few live in the present hour alone. Some amass property, looking forward to days of retirement and ease; some go to far-away fields of war to gather the laurels of victory, and to win what the world calls fame; and some seek stores of intellectual wealth, so as to secure the far-off coronet of scholarship and learned renown. But the harvest fails. Jealousy and envy do their work; and the ambassador is recalled, or the mind becomes feeble; through weariness or weakness the anticipated victory becomes a defeat. Somehow or other, either through events *without* or experience *within*, when God does not live in the heart and his glory is forgotten, the vintage fails.

II. WE LOOK FOR JOY IN HARVEST. That is the time for music and joy, or, as the prophet says, for singing and shouting. It is a time of stretched-out branches and purple groves. And God intended us to have joy in harvest. All innocent pursuits end in blessing, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. But if not, then there is dulness and gloom and failure; for the Lord of harvest is not there. The vintage fails, because he is the true Vine, and we are the branches, and every branch separated from him is cut down and withered.

III. WE LOOK FOR FRUIT AS WELL AS LEAFAGE. That is a remarkable sentence, "The treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses." Nothing but leaves! What a significant sentence! Everything seemed to promise well. There was the tender green of spring and the rich foliage of summer, but no blossoms hide under the luxuriant foliage. So it is with all mere convictions and resolves, with all passing sensations and excited feelings. We need ever to remember that the end of religion is fruit. Fruitful service, fruitful sacrifice. And without these, whatever else there be, the vintage fails.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4.—*The wisdom of the weaker.* The prophet counsels Moab to "make submission meet" to Judah (ver. 1), and to show her such kindness in the day of her distress (vers. 3, 4) as will be remembered in the day when prosperity and power will be again her portion.

I. THE WISDOM OF THE WEAKER COMMUNITY. 1. *Submission to the greater power under its lawful claim.* "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land"—pay the tribute which is due, and which will be accepted as an offering appropriate for the weaker to present and for the stronger to claim. In those days it was generally acknowledged that "might was right," and that the stronger potentate might properly exact tribute from the weaker, rendering a certain protectorate in return. Even in these days, when there have been happily established some ideas of international righteousness, it is generally acknowledged that a strong nation cannot afford to have a small province in its immediate neighbourhood in a condition of absolute independence of it. It considers that it has a right to claim its submission, receiving protection in return. It is undoubtedly the wisdom of the weaker community, in every realm, to submit itself to the stronger, to make terms with it, to give what it demands and accept what it offers. 2. *Kindness to the greater power in the day of its trial.* (Vers. 3, 4.) A short-sighted policy would advise rebellion, would recommend that the hour of its neighbour's depression should be used to strike a mortal blow and throw off the yoke; but very often a deeper wisdom and a truer sagacity will perceive that the strong power will bend, but cannot be broken—that the day will come (ver. 4) when it will shake off its oppressors and regain its supremacy, and that, therefore, the right course to pursue is to render every possible kindness in its dark and distressing hour, being a shadow from the heat, a refuge for the outcast, a home for the exile. Be quite sure that your rival or your enemy is attacked with a mortal sickness before you defy him, even on the low ground of policy; on the higher ground of rectitude, render aid to the nobler power when it is stricken down, and your magnanimity shall not be forgotten in the day of its revival.

II. THE WISDOM OF THE WEAKER MAN. This corresponds closely with that of the community. 1. *Meet at once every claim that is honestly preferred.* It is, no doubt, right to resist claims that are unjustly made. The judge, the magistrate, is an authority ordained of God, and to his tribunal we may appeal. But if we cannot dispute a claim that is made, we do well to "send the lamb," to pay the tribute at once. Otherwise we open the sluices through which many waters of suffering will flow in

upon us (see Matt. v. 25). 2. *Gain the favour of the strong in the day of her distress.* A foolish man will rejoice over the great when he falls—will say, "He is become one of ourselves," and will treat him with indignity. A wise man will only welcome such a day of discomfiture because it enables him to offer succour to the unfortunate, to open wide the door of his hospitality, to be a shadow from the heat to him on whom the scorching rays are falling; and the time will come when he who is thus helped will be able to offer welcome recompense, and in return for the temporary shelter will "receive to everlasting habitations" (Luke xvi. 9).

III. THE WISDOM OF THE HUMAN SOUL IN ITS RELATION TO CHRIST. This is: 1. *To meet his righteous claim;* not, indeed, to send a lamb to Zion, as in ancient days, for such offerings he asks not of us. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Humility of heart; faith in the Son of God, the Divine Redeemer; the presentation of our heart and life to his holy service; the offering of the obedient and submissive spirit;—this is the tribute to bring to his feet. And also: 2. *To show kindness to his people.* Our Lord is urgent with us that we should show kindness to all them that bear his Name, especially to the weak, the poor, and the despised, the downcast and the outcast, the "little ones" of his flock. Any deed of love we may do for any one of them will be accounted as an act of kindness shown direct to the Lord himself (Matt. xxv. 34—40).—C.

Ver. 5.—*The foundations of power.* On what foundation does power rest? What will secure it to those who have gained it, or into whose hands it falls? We look at the foundations of—

I. HUMAN SOVEREIGNTY. The throne of Judah was to be restored, and it should be "established in mercy" or benignity. He that sat upon it should "sit in truth," "judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness;" *i.e.* engaged in the administration of justice, endeavouring to act justly, and acting, not with a troublesome delay, but with an appreciable promptitude. These are the two foundations on which sovereignty rests everywhere and always—*benignity and justice.* The throne may rely on centuries of unchallenged rule, may be fortified by venerable tradition and ancient laws, may be guarded by many thousands of muskets; but it does not stand on any secure basis, it is certain to be ultimately overthrown, if it is unjust in enactment or harsh in execution. Righteousness, justice between man and man, between class and class, between sect and sect—a broad and unbroken impartiality; this great virtue, and its most excellent handmaid, benignity—kindness in manner, sympathy shown to the unfortunate, consideration for the poor and unbefriended;—these are the pillars on which alone human sovereignty will be secure. It has been well said by an English statesman that "justice and mercy are the supreme attributes of Deity, but all men everywhere comprehend them; there is no speech nor language in which their voice is not heard, and they cannot be vainly exercised" with the millions of mankind.

II. THE RULE OF CHRIST. Jesus Christ claims to be Sovereign of the world. "Thou art a King, then?" said the astonished procurator. "Thou sayest that I am a King," replied the Son of man. And his word has been justified by the event, for he is ruling now over vast multitudes of human souls. On what does his power rest? On these foundations—*righteousness and mercy.* 1. He, the Lord of truth, of holiness, of love, has a right to the homage of our minds, to the assent of our conscience, to the unmeasured gratitude and devoted love of our hearts. 2. He, who is full of kindness, of forbearance, of tenderness, of beneficent bestowal and gracious purpose,—he will continue to reign over those who have willingly bowed beneath his spiritual sway. "In mercy shall" *his* "throne be established."

III. INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE. Men covet power; they do well to do so. If they seek it in order that they may exert a precious and helpful influence on the minds and on the lives of others, their ambition is no other than an honourable and laudable aspiration. Its possession by any man must be according to "the ability which God giveth" (the original faculty with which his Creator has endowed him), and according to the favouring circumstances which God has thrown around him. But, these being taken into thought, the power which a man will wield and the duration of its exercise must depend on the measure of these two great moral qualities, benignity and righteousness. In *mercy*—in kindness, in breadth of beneficence, in readiness and reality of

sympathy, in genuineness and greatness of self-forgetting love—shall every man's throne be established. But he that would sit long on the throne, he that would continue to exercise power with men, he that would retain his influence over men, must be a *righteous* as well as a genial and gracious man; he must "seek judgment," must "haste to righteousness;" he must obviously endeavour to do that which is right between man and man; he must eagerly embrace the opportunity of making the crooked things straight, of restoring that which is wrong, of lifting up that which should no longer be abased.—C.

Vers. 6—11.—*Guilty arrogance and commendable compassion.* I. THE GUILT OF ARROGANCE. (Ver. 6.) Moab was proud, haughty, insolent, boastful; she lifted up herself in contemptuous defiance of Judah, of the city of God; and the prophet of Jehovah speaks of her arrogance as a very great offence in the eyes of the supreme Disposer. There is nothing which is more emphatically, or more repeatedly condemned in Scripture than haughtiness of heart or spiritual pride; it is a very rank offence in the estimation of the Holy One. And well may it be so; for what can be more pitifully wrong, more utterly unbecoming, than that such puny, ignorant, dependent creatures as we are should assert ourselves against the God from whom we came and in whom we live? It should be remembered that there is not only the arrogance of an idolatrous defiance, like that of Moab, but also, as too often found amongst ourselves, (1) the arrogance of *unbelief*—the product of intellectual pride; (2) the arrogance of *impiety*—the daring determination of the soul to live without God, to delay all attention to his sovereign claims until a late hour of life; (3) the arrogance of *vice*—the reckless resolution to snatch forbidden and unholy pleasure, whatever Divine laws may be broken, whatever human hearts may be embittered and human lives despoiled, whatever penal consequences may be entailed.

II. THE DEPTH OF ITS DISCOMFITURE. 1. This is seen in the sadness of the circumstances of Moab. Its inhabitants were "stricken" (ver. 7) with a crushing blow (see ch. v.; also ver. 8). Perhaps the culminating feature is seen in the shouting of the harvest home being exchanged for the shouting of the enemy's soldiery taking possession of the spoil (ver. 9). 2. It is also seen in the signs of prevailing misery. "Moab shall howl for Moab; every one shall howl" (ver. 7). Each one for himself and all for one another; "the people to the city, the city to the provinces." The land should be full of weeping. "Pride cometh before a fall;" "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." These are specimen-passages, representing a large number and a great variety of Divine declarations that arrogance will have a disastrous end. Of course, the special form which the sin takes will usually determine the particular punishment which will ensue. But there will surely come defeat, humiliation, distress; and of this distress the most intolerable element will probably be a lacerating remorse, in which the soul will smite itself because it yielded not, as it might have done, in the day of opportunity.

III. THE COMPASSION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (Vers. 9—11.) The prophet is so impressed with the deplorableness of Moab's condition that his heart is powerfully touched on its behalf. He "bewails" for it; his heart "sounds like an harp" for it. Human indignation against sin does well to pass into pity for the sorrow and the ruin which sin entails. This is truly God-like, Christian. "God so loved," with the love of an infinite compassion, this sin-ruined world, "that he gave his only begotten Son." Jesus Christ, when he beheld the doomed city of David, moved with a tender compassion for its coming woes, "wept over it." Let the holy grace of indignation have its due share in the Christian character; the soul that has it not is seriously wanting: but let it by no means exclude from the chambers of the heart that heavenly guest—Christ-like compassion. Let us have a large and generous pity for the fallen, for the guilty, for those who are suffering the bitter pangs of self-reproach; and let sympathetic sorrow pass speedily into a *wise and kind helpfulness*, which will lead back from the "far country" of sin and shame to the Father's home of righteousness and joy.—C.

Ver. 12.—*Unavailing prayer.* Moab "will come to his sanctuary to pray, but he shall not prevail." There are two kinds of unavailing prayer—

I. THE PRAYER WHICH IS ADDRESSED TO NON-EXISTENT BEINGS. How pitiable that,

as the consequence of the blinding influence of sin, men should have spent so much thought and effort in devotion that must have been absolutely barren of all good result! It is painful to think of the multitude of sacrifices—even human sacrifices—that have been offered up beneath every sky, of the labours that have been undergone, of the pilgrimages that have been made, of the tortures that have been inflicted, of the privations that have been endured, of the observances that have been gone through, and, if last not least, of the prayers that have been presented from full and burdened hearts, that have all been wasted, inasmuch as the devotees have all been making their appeal to an ear that could not hear, to a hand that could not help.

II. THE PRAYER WHICH IS UNAVAILINGLY ADDRESSED TO GOD. It is almost equally sad to think that there must have been, and must be, a vast amount of devotion vainly and fruitlessly directed to the living God. There is (1) the *formal* prayer—the prayer which goeth forth from feigned lips, in which men "honour God with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from him" (ch. xxix. 13); (2) the prayer of *pride* (see Luke xviii. 9—14); (3) the prayer of *impenitence* (Ps. lxvi. 18; Prov. xv. 29; xxviii. 9; ch. i. 15); (4) the prayer of *unbelief* (Heb. xi. 6); (5) the prayer of irreverence (Heb. v. 7); (6) the prayer which is unacceptable by reason of the *nature of the request*. If we ask God for his interposition in the spirit of vindictiveness rather than of generosity, or if we ask for material enrichment or earthly honours rather than the Divine favour and spiritual progress, we may be asking for that which our heavenly Father will deny *in mercy to ourselves*. For he may know that the very thing we crave would prove to be the most mischievous thing we could possibly possess. It may be worth our while to look also at—

III. THE PRAYER WHICH DOES NOT SEEM TO PREVAIL, BUT WHICH IS NOT INEFFECTUAL. There are many acts of devotion which do not bring any immediate, desired result, but they are far from being vain and fruitless. Such are: 1. The prayers which are not supplicatory at all—those which begin and end in communion; those in which the reverent and loving heart of the human child finds a holy and satisfying joy in holding fellowship with the heavenly Father, the redeemed spirit with its gracious Saviour, its unchanging Friend. 2. The prayers which are not answered at the time, but after some patient waiting. 3. The prayers which are answered in a way altogether different from that expected by the soul. As the prophet of the Lord met Naaman's request in a way which surprised and even angered him, so the Lord himself often meets our requests in a way which surprises and even "offends" us. We should prefer the immediate touch of his mighty hand, renewing, cleansing, enlarging, enlightening. But instead of this, he employs some simple and common instrumentality, or some unpleasant discipline, which brings about the change that is to be desired. Thus in Newton's hymn—

> "I asked the Lord that I might grow
> In faith and love and every grace."

But instead of "his love's constraining power" subduing sin and giving rest, come assaults from without and wrestlings within; and when the disturbed and questioning spirit asks, "Why is this?" the answer comes—

> "These inward trials I employ
> From self and pride to set thee free,
> And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
> That thou may'st seek thine all in me."

C.

Ver. 1.—*Recovering false steps.* The word "lamb" in this verse should be rendered "lambs." From 2 Kings iii. 4 we learn that the tribute rendered to the King of Israel by Mesha, King of Moab, was a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams, with the wool. At the death of Ahab Mesha refused to pay this tribute, and asserted his independence. In view of the exposure of Moab to attacks from Assyria, this was a false step, and Mesha is here urged to retrace that step, and at once send the tribute as a sign of renewed allegiance. The urgency of the case is shown in the advice to send the tribute round the southern part of the Dead Sea, because the northern end was already blocked by the Assyrians. This introduces the subject of

retracing our false steps; undoing the wrongs we have done; stopping back from our wilful paths, and beginning once more in the right way.

I. THIS IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY WORK. Its necessity may be argued from these points of view: 1. It is due to God that we should prove our sincerity by reparation as a sign of repentance. 2. It is due to those whom we have wronged that when we are brought to a right mind we should remove and undo the wrong. 3. It is due to ourselves that we should clear away from memory and conscience the bad past, as far as its evil consequences can be cleared. It is never enough for a man to "cease to do evil;" he is bound to remove, as far as possible, the issues of his past evil; and the intensest bitterness a good man can ever know arises from the fact that he cannot heal the wounds he has made, or check the evil working of the influences he has exerted, or example he has shown. When pleaded with in respect of his intense religious earnestness, John Newton is said to have replied, "How can the old blasphemer be silent?" He felt that life was not long enough, or powers large enough, for the undoing of the wrong wrought by a godless, vicious youth. And, further, if in life we swerve from the paths of rectitude, we shall find there is no going on round into those paths again; we must do one thing—we must go back the bad road we have chosen.

II. BUT THIS IS MOST DIFFICULT WORK. In either the larger or smaller senses to which reference has been made. And that because: 1. It involves serious self-humiliations. None of us can easily say, "I was wrong." 2. Because it exposes us to the scorn of the unprincipled, who regard all retracing of steps as a sign of weakness, and cannot understand the heroism of conquering the baser self. In the sense of undoing wrong that has been done it is most difficult, because the issues of our words and deeds go on out of our reach. It is as if we dropped poison into the fountain-head of a river, and then in remorse tried to cleanse that fount. It can be done, but away down the valley the poison has been carried, and none can bring back to life the poor dead fish that are borne on the current out to sea. The Apostle Paul never could undo the wrongs of that time when he so bitterly persecuted the disciples of the Nazarene.

III. YET THIS IS ALWAYS HOPEFULLY REMUNERATIVE WORK. It has its special rewards. 1. It satisfies our sense of duty. 2. It rests a conscience which otherwise would ceaselessly reproach. 3. It makes us clean-handed to appear before God. 4. It enables us to receive the assurance of Divine acceptance. 5. It becomes our witness to righteousness. Restitution, reparation, humbly going back the wilful way we may have taken, meet gracious Divine response. God surely smiles on the man who is brave enough to set wrongs right, and acknowledge the foolishness of his self-willed way.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Practical righteousness.* It does not seem certain whether this counsel is addressed to Moab in relation to the people fleeing for shelter from the invasion of Sennacherib, or to Israel in relation to the outcasts from Moab. Whichever it be, the point of the counsel is that they should *act* kindly, considerately, charitably. Righteousness is like "pure religion and undefiled;" it is *doing something*—"visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous;" "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." Absolute righteousness, as before the all-searching God, is not a human possibility; but Scripture uses the term in reference to men. The psalmist says, "Judge me according to mine integrity, and according to my righteousness which is in me." And our Lord pleaded thus, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE MERE SENTIMENT. A delusion of excited feeling, as it too often is with persons who take up with "holiness theories." The danger of sentiment is that too often it satisfies, and in the pleasant enjoyment of it a man has no care about giving righteousness its due expression. No fruits ever grew on the tree of sentimentality, and its leaves have no virtue for the healing of the nations.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS MAY BE A PROFESSION. It is assumed in our being Christians. It is the state into which we are called. It is guaranteed in our regeneration. Why,

then, may we not be satisfied with this profession? Because such righteousness is, at the best, something belonging to a *class*, and not to the individual; and the only righteousness worth having is something which the individual has for himself alone.

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST BE A PRACTICE. "Even as he [Christ] is righteous;" and his righteousness was distinctly *conduct*, and the *spirit* of conduct. Righteousness is truth, brotherliness, service, charity, self-denial, purity; it is God-likeness, and God is righteous in all *his works*. It is well for us to have and to cherish right feelings and good resolves, but the question to ask ourselves is this—If we have the opportunity, do we give these good resolves, do we find for these good thoughts and feelings practical expression? The message sent to David has often been misunderstood and misused. In connection with building the temple God said, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." But we forget that David went as far as he was allowed, in giving practical expression to what was in his heart; he made preparations for what he might not himself accomplish.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Righteousness hindered or hastened.* There is a possible reference here to King Hezekiah, and of him it is said that "seeking judgment and hasting righteousness" should be characteristics. The expression, "hasting righteousness," is a very suggestive one. Cheyne translates, "is prompt in righteousness." The following thought may be worked out and illustrated: Establishing righteousness in the earth is God's purpose, and towards the accomplishing of that purpose—the speedy accomplishment of it—every good man should work. But what are the facts of life, which we cannot fail to observe?

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS ACTIVE OPPONENTS. They who would dethrone God attack righteousness, which is the spirit and the demand of his rule.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS HINDERED BY STOLID RESISTERS. With whom it is much more difficult to deal than with active opponents. They simply block the way of God's chariot-wheels.

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS DELAYED BY THE WEAKLY INDIFFERENT. Who put no strength into either good or evil.

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS EARNEST HASTENERS. Men and women who strive for it, witness for it, suffer for it. Whose whole lives do but repeat the great cry with which the Book of God closes: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."—R. T.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The sadness of a silent land.* These verses bring before us the picture of a country from which, at the proper seasons, there rises no harvest and no vintage song. "Gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in its vineyard there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting." In every age and every land the gladness of the people has found expression in the joy of harvest, and no picture of woe, want, and desolation could be so effective as this simple one of the harvest-fields from which arise no song. Meditatively treated, we consider—

I. A LAND WITH NO JOY IN IT. That must be a land on which rests no Divine benedictions; and it must be the picture of—

II. A LIFE WITH NO JOY IN IT. That must be a life on which rests no Divine smile. We are like the birds, we can only sing in God's sunshine. Inexpressibly sad is human life without God. "The joy of the Lord is our strength;" but the sadness of agnosticism, atheism, Comtism, secularism, is the all-sufficing proof that *these* can never take the place of religion for man, who fain would sing for joy. Let such systems prevail, and the song of earth would cease. From the silent, songless land a heart-cry to the great heavens would go, saying—

"Oh for a vision! Oh for the face!"

R. T.

Ver. 12.—*Prayer that may not prevail.* The immediate reference of this verse is to the vain and hopeless prayers of Moab, offered in his time of distress to his idol-god Chemosh. Idols are only gods for sunshiny days, when their worshippers want nothing. There is no prevailing to secure help from them when life is full of calami-

ties, and when hearts ache. But the expression reminds us that prayer offered to the true God does not always prevail—at least, prevail to the securing of the precise thing asked for; though this comes about, not by reason of the Divine inability, but by reason of the Divine wisdom and love. Our prayer may not always prevail with Jehovah, for such reasons as the following—

I. BECAUSE THE ATTITUDE OF HIM WHO OFFERS IT IS WRONG. 1. He may *demand*, and that God can never allow. 2. He may not have clean hands; and man must put away his evil doings before he seeks God. 3. He may be unforgiving towards his brother; and if we forgive not our brother his trespass, God will heed no prayer from us for the forgiveness of ours. 4. He may fail in that *importunity* which is before God the sign of earnestness. 5. He may ask with purely selfish intentions—to consume the blessing sought upon his lusts.

II. BECAUSE THE PRAYER IS ONLY A CRY OF DESPAIR. Not a quiet, thoughtful turning to God, but only a feeling, "Nobody can help me—let us see if even God can." There is nothing in such a cry to which God can hopefully respond. For prayer to prevail with God there must be some *trust* in it.

III. BECAUSE GOD'S GOOD TIME FOR BLESSING MAY NOT HAVE COME. Prayer often only *seems* not to prevail, because the answer is held over until God's best time has come. And Divine delayings are tests of sincerity and inspirations to importunity. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry."

IV. BECAUSE OTHER PRAYERS MAY BE PRAYING AGAINST OUR PRAYERS. Other people's prayers, and the voice of some things in ourselves. Sodom's iniquity was crying hard against Abraham's prayer, and Abraham could not prevail. Jerusalem was crying hard against the Lord Jesus, and his prayer could not prevail. St. Paul's infirmities of temper were crying hard against his prayer that the thorn in the flesh should be removed; and they prevailed, not Paul, and the thorn stayed piercing on. Here is a hidden secret unfolded. Why have we so often seemed to pray only to feel the heavens like brass above us? We should know if we could hear all the prayers that rise to God, and know how many and how loud are the prayers that plead against us. God weighs them all, and the answer to us is always that which is best, *on the whole*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVII.

Vers. 1—3.—THE BURDEN OF DAMASCUS. The eye of the prophet travels northwards from Moab, and, passing over Ammon as an enemy of small account, rests once more upon Damascus, already threatened in ch. vii. 1—9, and probably already partially punished. Damascus is seen once more in alliance with Ephraim (ver. 3), and the two are joined with a new power, Aroer (ver. 2), which possesses several "cities." Woe is denounced on all the three powers: desolation on Damascus and Aroer; on Damascus and Ephraim, the complete loss of the last shadow of independence. The Assyrian inscriptions point out, as the probable date of the prophecy, the commencement of Sargon's reign—about B.C. 722 or 721.

Ver. 1.—Damascus is taken away from being a city. According to Vitringa, Damascus has been destroyed oftener than any other town; but it has a wonderful power of rising again from its ashes. Probably a destruction by Sargon is here intended ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 6).

Ver. 2.—The cities of Aroer are forsaken. That the Aroer of this passage cannot be either that on the Arnon, or that facing Rabbath-Ammon (Josh. xiii. 25), has long been perceived and recognized (see Mr. Grove's article on "Aroer" in the 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 115). It is evidently a city of the same name lying much further towards the north. And it is a city of far greater importance, having "cities" dependent on it. Now, Sargon's annals tell us of a "Gargar," a name well expressing the Hebrew עֲרֹעֵר, which was united in a league with Damascus, Samaria, Arpad, and Simyra, in the second year of Sargon, and was the scene of a great battle and a great destruction. Sargon besieged it, took it, and reduced it to ashes ('Records of the Past,' *l.s.c.*). There is every reason to recognize the "Aroer" of this verse in the "Gargar" of Sargon's inscriptions. They shall be for flocks (comp. ch. v. 17; vii. 25). It marked the very extreme of desolation, that cattle

should be pastured on the sites of cities. None shall make them afraid; *i.e.* "there shall be no inhabitants to make any objection."

Ver. 3.—**The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim.** Sargon did not destroy Samaria on the occasion of his first capture. But he says that he "reduced it to a heap of ruins" on the occasion of its second capture ('Records of the Past,' *l.s.c.*). **And the kingdom from Damascus.** We do not hear of any King of Damascus after Rezin, who was slain by Tiglath-Pileser about B.C. 732. Damascus, however, reasserted her independence in B.C. 721, and probably set up a king at the same time. In B.C. 720 she was reduced and destroyed. Nothing more is heard of her until B.C. 694—the eleventh year of Sennacherib—when her "governor" is Assyrian Eponym, and she must therefore have been absorbed into the Assyrian empire. **The remnant of Syria.** This phrase shows that the great blow which struck down Syria—Tiglath-Pileser's capture of Damascus and slaughter of Rezin—was a thing of the past. Syria was already but "a remnant." Now she was to cease to exist altogether. **They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel.** Ironical. The irony is made apparent by the next verse.

Vers. 4—11.—A DENUNCIATION OF WOE ON ISRAEL, COMBINED WITH THE PROMISE OF A REMNANT. Israel, having united herself with Syria to resist the Assyrians, will incur a similar fate. Her glory will decay, her population dwindle and almost disappear. Still there will be a few left, who, under the circumstances, will turn to God (ver. 7). But it will be too late for anything like a national recovery; the land will remain "a desolation" on account of the past sins of its inhabitants (vers. 9—11).

Ver. 4.—**The glory of Jacob shall be made thin.** There is reason to believe that the deportation of the Israelites was gradual. Sargon, on taking Samaria for the first time, in B.C. 722, carried off no more than 27,290 of the inhabitants (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 125). Over the remainder he appointed governors, and required them to pay the same taxation as before. About B.C. 715 he placed a number of Arabs in Samaria, probably deporting natives to make room for them (ibid., p. 128). The continuance of a remnant of Israelites in the land down to B.C. 625 is indicated by 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9. **The fatness of his flesh shall wax lean** (comp. ch. x. 16). Depopulation is primarily intended; but there is, perhaps, also a more general reference to depression, wasting, and misery.

Ver. 5.—**As when the harvestman gathereth the corn.** Death is the "harvestman" here, and gathers the Israelites by shocks, or sheaves, into his garner. **A great depopulation** appears in 2 Kings xvii. 25, where we learn that lions so multiplied in the land as to become a terror to the few inhabitants. **Reapeth the ears.** Mr. Cheyne well remarks that the "ears" only were reaped, the stalk being cut close under the ear. This was the practice also in Egypt (Rawlinson, 'Hist. of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 162). **In the valley of Rephaim.** The valley of Rephaim was the scene of David's double victory over the Philistines, related in 2 Sam. v. 17—25. It is disputed whether it lay north or south of Jerusalem; but the connection with Bethlehem (2 Sam. xxiii. 13—17) and with the cave of Adullam seem decisive in favour of a southern position. A "valley," however (*'emek*), suitable for the cultivation of corn, in this direction, has yet to be discovered.

Ver. 6.—**Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it**; rather, *yet gleanings shall be left in it.* There is no mention of grapes, and it is clear that the "gleaning" intended is that of an olive-ground. **As the shaking of an olive tree**; rather, *as at the beating of an olive tree.* The olive crop was obtained, not by shaking, but by beating the trees (Deut. xxiv. 20). The owner was forbidden to "go over the boughs again," in order that a portion of the crop might be left for the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless to glean. **In the top of the uppermost bough.** Where the sticks of the beaters had not reached. **Four or five in the outmost fruitful branches**; rather, *four or five apiece on its fruitful branches.* This is the average that would be left, after beating, on a good-sized branch.

Ver. 7.—**At that day shall a man look to his Maker.** We have evidence of this revulsion of feeling on the part of Israel in the statement of Chronicles that, in the reign of Josiah, offerings of money were made for the temple service by men of "Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel," which the Levites collected and brought to Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxiv. 9).

Ver. 8.—**And he shall not look to the altars.** The altars at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings xii. 28—33) may be intended, or the Israelites may have had other idolatrous altars besides these (2 Kings xvii. 11; Hos. viii. 11). Josiah, about B.C. 631, broke down altars throughout all the land of Israel, in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon (?), even unto Naphtali (2 Chron. xxxiv. 5—7). Apparently he had the consent of the inhabitants to this demolition. **Either the groves, or the images.** *Ashêrah*, the word here and elsewhere commonly translated "grove" in the Authorized Version, is now

generally admitted to have designated an artificial construction of wood or metal, which was used in the idolatrous worship of the Phœnicians and the Israelites, probably as the emblem of some deity. The Assyrian "sacred tree" was most likely an emblem of the same kind, and may give an idea of the sort of object worshipped under the name of Asherah (comp. 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. pp. 235—237). The Israelites, in the time of their prosperity, had set up "groves" of this character "on every high hill, and under every green tree" (2 Kings xvii. 10). Many of them were still standing when Josiah made his iconoclastic raid into the Israelite country (2 Chron. xxxiv. 5—7), and were broken down by him at the same time as the altars. The "images" of this place are the same as those coupled with the Israelite "groves" in 2 Chron. xxxiv. 7, namely "sun-images," emblems of Baal, probably pillars or conical stones, such as are known to have held a place in the religious worship of Phœnicia.

Ver. 9.—**In that day.** While a remnant of the Israelites shall repent and turn to God, throwing in their lot with Judah, as it would seem, the country generally shall feel the weight of God's chastening hand, on account of Israel's former sins and offences. **As a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch;** rather, *as the forsaken tract of woodland and mountain-crest* (Kay). The reference is to the condition of the land when it passed out of the possession of the Canaanitish nations. It was then forsaken and desolate. So shall it be once more, when Israel is expelled for the same sins (see 2 Kings xvii. 7, 8). **Which they left because of the children of Israel;** rather, *which men forsook before the children of Israel;* i.e. from which the Canaanites fled as the children of Israel advanced and took possession. The writer ignores the long and fierce struggle which the Canaanites made, and looks only to the result—retirement from a desolated country.

Ver. 10.—**Because thou hast forgotten;** rather, *because thou didst forget.* The late repentance of a "remnant" which "looked to their Maker" (ver. 7) could not cancel the long catalogue of former sins (2 Kings xvii. 8—17), foremost among which was their rejection of God, or, at any rate, their complete forgetfulness of his claims upon them. **The Rock of thy strength.** God is first called "a Rock" in Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31. The image is caught up by the psalmists (2 Sam. xxii. 2, 32, 47; xxiii. 3; Ps. xviii. 2, 31, 46; xix. 14; xxviii. 1, etc.), and from them passes to Isaiah (see, besides the present passage, ch. xxvi. 4; xxx. 29; and xliv. 8). Among the later prophets only Habakkuk uses it (i. 12). Israel, instead of looking to this "Rock," had looked to their rock-fortresses (ver. 9). **Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants;** rather, *dost thou plant,* or *hast thou planted.* Forgetfulness of Jehovah has led to the adoption of a voluptuous religion—one of debased foreign rites. There is possibly, as Mr. Cheyne thinks, a special reference to the cult of Adonis. **Shalt set it;** rather, *settest it,* or *hast set it.* "It" must refer to "field" or "garden" understood. The later Israelite religion has been a sort of pleasant garden, planted with exotic slips from various quarters—Phœnicia, Syria, Moab, etc. It has been thought permissible to introduce into it any new cult that took the fancy. Hence the multiplication of altars complained of by Hosea (viii. 11; x. 1; xii. 11).

Ver. 11.—**In the day;** or, *in a day* (Kay). **Shalt thou make;** rather, *thou makest.* Each new slip that is planted is forced to take root and grow and flourish at once; the next morning it is expected to have formed its seed and reached perfection. So the harvest is hurried on; but when it is reached, the day of visitation has arrived—a day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

Vers. 12—14.—A PROPHECY AGAINST ASSYRIA. This passage is, apparently, out of place. At any rate, it is quite unconnected with what precedes, and almost equally so with what follows. Still, it must be borne in mind that, until the destruction of Sennacherib's army, Isaiah has the thought of the Assyrians, as the pressing danger, always before him, and continually reverts to it, often abruptly, and without preparation (see ch. v. 26—30; vii. 17—25; viii. 5—8; x. 5—19, 24—34; xiv. 24—27). The present prophecy seems, more distinctly than any other in the purely prophetical chapters, to point to the miraculous destruction of the host which Sennacherib was about to bring against Jerusalem.

Ver. 12.—**Woe to the multitude of many people;** rather, *Ho for the tumult of many peoples!* The advance of an army composed of soldiers from many nations is descried. They advance with noise and tumult—a tumult compared with that of "seas that are tumultuous." Under the circumstances of the time, it is reasonable to suppose the Assyrians to be intended (comp. ch. xxii. 6, 7). The rushing sound of the advance is borne in strongly upon the prophet's mind, and made the subject of three consecutive clauses.

Ver. 13.—**God shall rebuke them;** literally, *he shall rebuke them*—he who alone can do so. There is no need to mention his name. **They shall flee far off.** The destruc-

tion of the great bulk of Sennacherib's army in the night was followed, as soon as morning came, by the hasty flight of the survivors (2 Kings xix. 36; ch. xxxvii. 37). **And shall be chased.** Herodotus says that the Egyptians pursued the army of Sennacherib and slew vast numbers (ii. 141). **As the chaff of the mountains** (comp. Hos. xiii. 3). **Threshing-floors** were ordinarily placed upon eminences (2 Sam. xxiv. 18; 2 Chron. iii. 1), where the wind had freer course and consequently greater power. **Like a rolling thing;** or, *like whirling dust* (Kay). The word used commonly means "a wheel."

Ver. 14.—**Behold at evening-tide trouble;** rather, *terror*, as the word is elsewhere always translated (comp. 2 Kings xix. 35, "It came to pass *that night* that the angel of the Lord went out," etc.). **He is not** (comp. 2 Kings xix. 35, "They were all dead corpses"). **That spoil us . . . that rob us** (see 2 Kings xviii. 13—16).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 6—11.—*National repentance may come too late to avert national ruin.* The crisis of a nation's fate is brought on by slow degrees, and results from a multitude of acts, each one of which, when once done, is past recall. Up to a certain point there is a possibility of retrieval. "Tout peut se rétablir," as a great monarch of our own time said. The modes of action that have brought the state into difficulties may be renounced, or even reversed; and recovery may set in as a natural consequence of such reversal. Or the change of conduct may have appeased God's anger, and his favour may raise up the nation which he has depressed, to mark his displeasure. Such was the case with united Israel during the period of the judges. Seven times was the nation for its sins "sold into the hand" of a foreign power, its independence suspended, its ruin all but accomplished; and seven times upon its repentance did God raise up a deliverer who restored it to vigorous life and re-established its prosperity. But this process cannot go on for ever. A time comes when the sources of national vigour are sapped, when exhaustion has set in, when foreign neighbours have become enormously powerful, and when it would require, not one miracle only, but a series of miracles, to save the state from the consequences of its long-continued misconduct. Then, although the remnant left may perceive its danger, and regret the past, and repent, and put away the evil of its doings, and even reverse its modes of action, turning to God (ver. 7) instead of turning away from him (ver. 10), and looking to the Holy One instead of looking to idols and vanities, it may be too late to reverse the fiat that has long since gone forth, or to arrest the destruction decreed and determined on. The remnant may save their own souls, but they cannot save their country. The "day of grief and of desperate sorrow" comes on, whatever they may do; and the nation perishes in consequence of its past misdeeds, despite its tardy amendment.

Ver. 10.—*The Rock of our strength.* Irreligious men have many "rocks of strength," or at any rate think that they have many. 1. "Some put their trust in chariots and in horses," believe in "big battalions" as really ruling the world, and think they have only to swell their armies in order to sway the course of events at their pleasure. Tell them that "it is nothing with God to help, whether with many or with them that have no power" (2 Chron. xiv. 11); assure them that "it is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few, and with the God of heaven it is all one to deliver with a great multitude or a small company, for the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of a host, but strength cometh from heaven" (1 Macc. iii. 18, 19); and they open their eyes wide with astonishment, and set down the speaker as a dreamy fanatic. 2. Others regard wealth as a tower of strength, a "rock" that will never fail them. Three things alone are wanted to secure complete success in life, and these are "Money, money, money." Their highest idea of perfect safety and security is "the Bank of England." No qualms of fear assail them so long as they have a good balance at their bankers. "Soul," they say to themselves, "thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke xii. 19). Tell them that riches make themselves wings, talk to them of failures, bankruptcies, revolutions, and they will laugh you to scorn; theirs are safe, they are quite certain, and that is enough for them. 3. A third class "trust in princes," or great men. They have a patron, a protector, a "friend at court;" and all must necessarily go well with them. Nay,

perhaps they have "two or three strings to their bow"—powerful friends belonging to both parties; how, then, is it possible that they should not be secure? Christian men have, on the other hand, but one "Rock of strength," but one Trust, but one Stay, and that is God. God is their "Rock"—

I. AS BEING FIRM AND IMMOVABLE. All else is shifting and changing. Men die, even though they be princes or prime ministers. Armies melt away, suffer defeat, mutiny. Wealth becomes the prey of the spoiler, is lost through fraud, or taken away by violence. God always remains the same—firm, solid, substantial; something on which we can count, something that will not disappear, that will not change, that we can rely upon as a sure foundation.

II. AS BEING A STRONGHOLD AND DEFENCE. The Israelites looked to their fortified cities to protect them (ver. 9). The Christian looks to God. God's strength is such that nothing can prevail against it. He is an absolutely sure Defence, able to save men "to the uttermost." No one that has relied wholly and solely upon God, has ever found his reliance misplaced or his defence fail him. If we make God our Refuge, we place ourselves in an impregnable citadel. He is omnipotent, and therefore ever able to save; he is faithful, and therefore ever willing to save.

III. AS BEING A SHADOW FROM THE HEAT, A SHELTER FROM THE TEMPEST. God not only protects but consoles, not only saves but comforts. He is "the Shadow of a great Rock in a weary land." When dangers threaten, when calamities come, when we are drooping beneath the noonday heat, or chilled by the pitiless storm, we can rest on him, and he will cheer us; we can make our appeal to him, and he will give us relief and refreshment. It is promised that, ultimately, "God shall wipe away tears from all eyes" (Rev. xxi. 4). Already he does this to a large extent. Not only is he our Defence and Stay, but he is a "Rock" that "follows us" (1 Cor. x. 14) through the wilderness of human life, assuaging our griefs, taking away our sorrows, giving us shelter, comfort, satisfaction, peace, happiness. He is himself an ever-present Joy, possessing which, whatsoever happened to us, we should be content.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Damascus and Israel.* The present oracle bids us turn to a different scene—to the famed city and territory of Damascus. It lies in the vast rich plain east of Mount Antilibanus, on the border of the desert. Through the plain flows the river Barada, probably the *Abana* in which Naaman delighted. "In the midst of the plain lies at your feet the vast lake or island of deep verdure—walnuts and apricots waving above, corn and grass below; and in the midst of the mass of foliage rises, striking its white arms of streets hither and thither, and its white minarets above the trees which embosom them, the city of Damascus. On the right towers the snowy height of Hermon, overlooking the whole scene. Close behind are the sterile limestone mountains, so that you stand literally between the living and the dead" (Stanley). The river turns what would otherwise be a desert into a rich garden, full of walnuts, pomegranates, figs, plums, apricots, citrons, pears, and apples.

I. HISTORY OF DAMASCUS. There were traditions of Abraham lingering from early times about the city. Eliezer of Damascus was his steward (Gen. xv. 2). But the history is a blank till the time of David. He, being at war with Hadadezer, King of Zobah, encountered Syrians of Damascus, who came to succour his foe, and slew of them twenty-two thousand men. He then garrisoned the whole land with Israelites (2 Sam. viii. 5, 6; 1 Chron. xviii. 5). From Solomon's time we have hints of enmity between Damascus, whose king appears to have been titularly designated "Hadad," and Israel; also of Rezin, from Zobah (1 Kings xi. 23; xv. 19; 2 Chron. xvi. 3). The fourth Hadad, with thirty-two subject kings, marched against Ahab, and laid siege to Samaria (1 Kings xx. 1). In the end, the invader became subject to Ahab (1 Kings xx. 13—34). Three years later, Ahab was defeated and slain in his attempt on Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings xxii. 1—4, 15—37). The Syrians of Damascus were encouraged to a second invasion of Israel, and a second siege of Samaria, which was raised in a panic (2 Kings vii. 6, 7). A new page of history opens with the succession of Hazael to the rule of Damascus, and the struggle against the Assyrians. Probably the dread of the

latter led to an alliance between Israel and Damascus a century later. The march of Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel against Jerusalem brings us within the scope of Israel's view (ch. vii. 1—6; 2 Kings xvi. 5). Ahaz placed himself under the protection of Assyria; Rezin was slain, his kingdom brought to an end, and Damascus destroyed, its people being carried captive to Assyria (2 Kings xvi. 9; cf. ch. vii. 8; Amos i. 5).

II. THE PROPHET'S DESCRIPTION OF ITS FATE. The fair city will be effaced from the number of those that exist, and will become a heap of fallen ruins. And Israel, which has hung her fortunes on those of Damascus, will share her fate. The very sound of the word *Aroer*, reminding of the nature of *bareness, nakedness*, had an ill omen. The strong places of Ephraim, *i.e.* of Israel, are laid low, and Damascus ceases to exist as a kingdom. And the Aramæans who do not fall in battle are carried away captive. The fate of Damascus is as pathetic as that of a distressed woman. Cities were in ancient thought generally seen under the ideal of the woman, their beauty as her beauty, their sorrows as hers. Damascus waxes feeble and turns to flee, and fear seizes on her; anguish and sorrow have taken her, as a woman in travail. "The city of praise is gone, the city of my joy!" exclaims Jeremiah (xlix. 24, 25). "Cities have been as lamps of life along the pathway of humanity and religion. Within them science has given birth to her noblest discoveries. Behind their walls freedom has fought its noblest battles. They have stood on the surface of the earth like breakwaters, rolling back or turning aside the swelling tide of oppression. Cities indeed have been the cradle of human liberty. I bless God for cities" (Guthrie).

III. AFFLICTION OF ISRAEL AND HER REPENTANCE. (Vers. 4—8.) 1. *Images of national decay.* The glory of Jacob wastes, the fat of his flesh grows thin. Necessary and constant in thought is the connection between the flourishing of a land and the blessing of God, the withdrawal of his blessing and the withering of its fruits, the failure of the supply of food. We must believe in this connection without hastily presuming, as superstition does, to detect the exact sin which has called down the displeasure of God. Our poet Tennyson, in some dark pictures of superstition in his 'Queen Mary,' represents the queen as saying that "God is hard upon the people" because the nobles would not give the Church lands back. And when she exclaims on the "harvestless autumn, horrible agues, plague," the king replies—

> "The blood and sweat of heretics at the stake
> Is God's best dew upon the barren field."

Such are the reasonings of bigotry and fanaticism. Then only do we make the proper application of the lessons of suffering, when we visit our own errors with self-chastisement, and stir up the neglected gift, the forgotten talent, in ourselves. Another image is that of the field of corn falling before the mower. Israel is ripe for judgment, as the field of corn for the reaper. On the broad vale of Rephaim, sloping down to Bethlehem, only an ear or two will be seen scattered here and there. That vale may be viewed as symbolic of the great world, and that reaping as prophetic of the day of judgment, when on the white cloud sits one like the Son of man, having a golden crown on his head, and in his hand a sharp sickle; and another angel comes out of the temple, and cries with a loud voice to him that sits on the cloud, "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Rev. xiv.). Few will escape the judgment, and yet a few there will be. At the olive-beating, when it seems, at a superficial glance, that the tree is quite stripped, there nevertheless remain "two or three berries high up at the top; four, five on each of its branches." 2. *Redemption of the remnant.* This word, "The remnant shall return," is the standing word of promise and of hope for Israel. It contains the "law of Israel's history." The ring is gone, but the finger remains; the tree is felled, but the root-stump may yet send out suckers; from the bared harvest-field some gleanings may yet be gathered. And so Israel stands as the type of human life. All is not lost while conscience remains, while will may still exert its energy against evil, and in the reformation of the habits. But there must be this reformation, which begins with a *looking up to God.* The state of the soul depends on the direction of its gaze. We look where we love, and our looking may produce love. Much has Scripture to say on the moral effect of vision. Sometimes it is equivalent to enjoying: "What man is he that will see good?" And as we

do not willingly bend our eyes and keep them fixed upon sights which strike pain to the feelings, the prayer, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding iniquity," is equivalent to the prayer that we may have no relish in evil ways. In the days of repentance men will look up to their Creator. It is when we turn our eyes from our Maker and fix them exclusively on the creature that we forget our dependence. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" this is the thought which expresses the foundation of all reverence, the duty of all worship and obedience. As all idolatry means loss of self-respect, so regard to the great and glorious Creator reflects itself in veneration for the nature he has given us, the image of his own. And he is the Holy One of Israel. In every family, every congregation, every state, there must be an existing ideal of righteousness, of truth, of purity. Such ideals are the shadows of the personality of the holy God. If they pass away from the faith and religious imagination of a people, they fall into sensuality and materialism. The first step, then, towards a better life is to look away from self, and from the evil associations which have grown into one's habits, or into which one has grown, to God as the Supreme and the Holy. *Looking up to God* will mean *looking away from idols.* "He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands; and what his fingers have made he will not regard, neither the groves nor the images." True religion alone can drive out superstition. Science has not and cannot do it. Men must either be superstitious or religious; for the imaginative faculty demands, and will have, nourishment. The great prophets of Israel, training men's minds to look up to the great spiritual Source of man and of nature, have taught us lessons that can never become obsolete. But the heathen idolatry referred to should be more closely considered.—J.

Ver. 8.—*The prophet on heathen worship.* Having described in brief the true religion as a "looking up to God" as Maker and Redeemer of Israel, the prophet with equal expressiveness characterizes the heathen worship around.

I. IT IS REVERENCE FOR THE OBJECT OF HUMAN ART. Contemptuous is the reference to "the work of his hands," and "that which his fingers have made"—altars and images. When the spiritual nerve of religion is weakened, the affections fix upon the symbols, forms, and accessories of religion. The soul that has lost its God must have some visible substitute, as a pet, a plaything, an idol. When the meaning of sacrifice is deeply realized and felt, any bare table will suffice for altar. But as the idea and feeling become extinct, all the more will men seek to supply the void by some beauty in the object. The shrine becomes more splendid as devotion becomes more cold. Perhaps the prophet is thinking of the case of King Ahaz. He went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, and there saw an altar which so pleased him, that he sent the pattern of it to Urijah the priest, who built one to correspond. And this was a king who "sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Kings xvi.). And Manasseh, rejecting the good example of Hezekiah his father, set up altars to Baal, and made a grove, and plunged deeply into all manner of superstition (2 Kings xxi.). The Prophet Hosea pointedly speaks of the tendency in the people generally: "Because Ephraim has made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin" (viii. 2). The connection of this with luxury is pointed out by our prophet in ch. ii. 7, 8. But what strikes him especially with astonishment is the addiction to "art for art's sake." This has been a cant and, to some extent, a creed in our time. When carried out, it must mean the valuation of human genius and talent regardlessly of the subjects on which, and the ends for which, it is employed. No matter how sensualizing or otherwise debasing to feeling the painter's or the sculptor's theme, the cleverness with which he treats form and colour, light and shade, is only worth attending to. These doctrines may be carried into the church, which may become a place for mere imaginative and sensuous enjoyment; and people may find they cannot "look up to God" in a building whose lines are incorrectly drawn, or where the latest fashion of ecclesiastical foppery is not kept up. By-and-by it will be discovered that the house of God has been turned into a theatre, containing, it is true, an altar, but, like the altar in the great theatre at Athens, serving for little more than a station of performers. Spiritual worship is extinct with us if we cannot lift up eye, and heart, and hand, and voice to the Eternal with equal joy, if need demand, in the barn as in the cathedral. But how

wide-reaching the principle of idolatry! The delight in genius, the admiration for it, may enter into religious feeling as one of its richest elements; it may, on the other hand, be separated from religious feeling altogether, and be the principle of an idolatry.

II. IT IS IMPURE AND CRUEL. There is an allusion to the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, and what we know of these deities indicates beings conceived by those worshippers as dark, wrathful, malignant, and lustful. Baal, often named in the plural Baalim, is closely related to, if not identical with, Moloch (see Jer. vii. 31; xix. 5; xxxii. 35), whose terrible wrath was supposed to be manifested in the torrid heat of summer, and who exacted human sacrifices. In great dangers kings sacrificed to this Bel-Moloch their only sons (2 Kings iii. 27); and this is sternly denounced in Lev. xx. 3. It would seem that Israelites in their declension confounded the nature of this heathen god with that of Jehovah (Judg. xi. 34; Numb. xxv. 4). Read the eloquent protest of Micah vi. 7, and see how clearly in that animated passage the contrast is made between the merciful and holy religion of Jehovah and the cursed ritual of Baal or of Moloch. "To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God," —these are the requirements of true religion. By the side of Baal was Ashtoreth in Canaan (Judg. x. 6) and in Syria. The Greeks called her Astarte. At Babylon she was known as Mylitta or Beltis, consort of Bel; and Herodotus describes the darkly superstitious and impure character of her worship, which involved the profanation of women (i. 199). The religion of Israel knows no goddess; the people itself, when true to their faith, felt themselves to be as a people, the bride of Jehovah, and unfaithfulness to him is a crime analogous to unfaithfulness to the nuptial tie. "Israel my people, I their God," is the symbolic word of the covenant between spirit and Spirit, which religion ever is, in its truth and purity. There are lessons for us in all this. There are ever tendencies at work to degrade and defile the holy ideas of our religion. Sometimes it is wealth, sometimes it is ignorance, sometimes greed and other passions. Men would subdue the spirit of Christianity to their own liking, and bow down, if not to the work of their fingers, to the impure idols of an unchastened fancy. The preacher, the true prophet, must, on the other hand, be ever upholding the purity of doctrine, and exhibit those grand requirements to which the conscience must, however reluctantly, respond. And he must lay it to heart that the purer religion can never be the most fashionable. If the people turn aside to groves and altars more suited to their taste, at least let him make it his one concern to "save himself and them that hear him."—J.

Vers. 9—11.—*Forgetfulness of God and its consequences.* I. GOD AS AN OBJECT OF THE SOUL'S ATTENTION. He is the "God of men's salvation." His Name calls up all those ideas of power, of grace, of goodness, necessary to the Deliverer, the Saviour. To acknowledge that such a Being exists is not enough; the eye of the spirit must be turned to him, its gaze fixed upon him, its ear bent towards the place of his holy oracle. Micah says in evil times, "I will look unto Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." To think of God in his moral relations to us brings confidence and security to the heart. And hence the expressive image of the Rock on which the fortress stands, as symbolic of him, so frequently employed in Scripture (Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37; 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. xxii, 2, 3, 32; Ps. xviii. 31, 46; xix. 14; xxviii. 1; xxx. 1, 2). How much depends in our intellectual life on *attraction*—the grasp of objects, the remembrance of what they are, the firm hold of principles and truths! Impressions are made upon us as in wax or in running water, without this tension of the will. And how in various ways does Scripture press upon us the need of attention in religious things! "Earnestly give heed," "Remember," "Be mindful," "Look unto the Lord," etc., are all exhortations implying the need of prayer and habitual direction of the spirit to higher things. There can be no clear memory and no confident expectation where the mind has been lax and listless.

II. CONSEQUENCES OF FORGETTING GOD. Ephraim, turning away from its true rocky stronghold in Jehovah, will see its own castles lie in ruin and desolation. The estrangement from God is marked by indulgence in pleasure and idolatry. The people planted pleasant gardens, and sowed them with strange grapes; *i.e.* formed an alliance

with a stranger, the King of Damascus. And these new institutions were carefully fenced, *i.e.* apparently they were established as a state religion. "And the very next morning he had brought into blossom what he had sown. The foreign layer had shot up like a hot-house plant, *i.e.* the alliance had speedily grown into a hearty agreement, and had already produced one blossom at any rate, viz. the plan of a joint attack upon Judah. But this plantation, so flattering and promising for Israel, and which had succeeded so rapidly, and to all appearance so happily, was a harvest heap for the day of judgment." The closing words of this strophe are impressive: "The day of grief and desperate sorrow;" or, "The day of deep wounds and deadly sorrow of heat." Let us fix on these words. Let us forget Ephraim for the moment, and think of the individual, think of ourselves. The words hint at remorse, which has been called "the echo of a lost virtue." It will come upon all of us in so far as, remembering many things not to be neglected, self-interest, duty to family, Church, country, we have yet forgotten the one thing needful—have not brought all our life's concerns into that unity which reference to the Supreme Will imparts. Life should be direct and simple; a simple piety can only render it so. There may be mindfulness about many things, distracting us from the central interest. How can it avail us to have remembered to be prudent, to have regarded public opinion, to have taken care to be with the majority, to swim with the stream, and in the end we find that this has been a turning of the back on God, and so an illusion, a misconception of life? For if God be remembered, nothing important will be forgotten; if he be forgotten, nothing is truly seen—attention is beguiled by fantasy, and life becomes the pursuit of a dream.—J.

Vers. 12—14.—*Sounds from afar.* In the distance the prophet hears a vague tumult, like that of the sea with its roaring, incoming tide. It is the noise of the invading host. Readers will recollect the powerful passage describing the eve of the battle of Waterloo—the dull distant sound repeated until the conviction flashes, "It is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!" So does the prophet listen to the uproar of the advancing Assyrians.

I. THE POETIC REPRESENTATION. It is one of sublimity and terror, appealing through the sense of hearing to the imagination, and calling up indefinable alarm and sorrow. He hears in the distance the gathering of a multitude of nations, represented by the imperial name of Asshur. These hosts spread out in long line like the rolling wave, one excited surging mass, threatening to carry everything before it into destruction. Such an image may represent any great movement which seems at any time to threaten the spiritual life of a Church, of a nation. Never was there a time when anxious listeners did not hear such rising sounds in the distance; the statesman trembling for the welfare of institutions, the believer for the stability of faith. Is there just cause for alarm? Let the prophet answer.

II. THE PROPHECY OF JUDGMENT. Remarkable is the picture of the sudden change. The power of the Divine Word is instantaneously felt. "It costs God simply a threatening word, and the mass all flies apart, and falls into dust, and whirls about in all directions, like the chaff of threshing-floors in high situations, or like dust whirled up by the storm." In the evening the destruction of the Assyrians begins, and in the morning they are completely destroyed. And the oracle ends with an expression of triumph over this portion and lot of the spoiler and the plunderer.

LESSONS. 1. The Church, Christianity, religion, civilization, seem in every age to be threatened; yet they are ever safe. Force, numbers, armies, have but the show of strength when confronted with the spiritual world. 2. God is ever in his heaven—cannot and will not desert his place. 3. His judgments and rebukes are the expression of the eternal truth of things, and must prevail.—J.

Ver. 14.—*The gloomy evening.* "Behold at evening-tide trouble." We all love beautiful evenings, whether on land or sea. Then, when the clouds of purple and amber across the horizon constitute a royal chariot for the setting sun, we gaze with admiration and delight on the glorious close of day.

I. TROUBLE IS NEVER SO SAD AS IN THE EVENING. At morning or midday we have more of strength to bear it; we can brace our energies to fight the battle or to endure

the burden. But in the evening, when heart and strength fail, we look for quiet comfort and considerate friends, and the gentle words of love. Trouble in the evening is a pensive sight. But if it be connected with *sin*, with personal wrong-doing, how bitter a cup it is! *Then*, when there should be memory of holy deeds and earnest words; *then*, when we may fairly think of an honourable reputation well earned, and an influence which we may hope, indeed, will be an "after-glow" after we are dead. Yet so it is. Sin has its judgments, which "follow after" even here below.

II. TROUBLE IN THE EVENING IS WELL EXPLAINED. The prophet says (ver. 13), "God shall rebuke them." It is all contained in that. Rebuke! That involves in its utterance conscience and memory, else how could we feel rebuke? We feel all that is meant by rebuke more from some than others. It does not always need words. A little spectacle that recalls some past scene, an old letter, the visiting of half-forgotten places, the swift rush at times of old memories,—these often have rebukes in them. We have neglected so many never-recurring opportunities, we have scattered so many seeds of evil. But when God, the living God, rebukes us, how can we stand? For he knows our most secret thoughts, and in his book all the life is written.

III. TROUBLE IN THE EVENING MAY STILL BE THE LAST ANGEL OF GOD'S MERCY HERE. Even then it *is* evening, and the light lingers. The Saviour's power to save is still the same. The city of refuge has its gates open. God's renewing and redeeming grace may yet be ours. Not even then need we despair; for as there is a strain of hope coming for the nation Israel which will occupy us further on in these prophecies, so there is hope in personal life, even in the latter days, if we turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart. The lingering light of evening still falls on the cross of him who said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—6.—*Reduction.* In the spoliation and consequent decrepitude of Damascus and Samaria we have a picture of—

I. A NATION DENUDED OF ITS POWER. Under the judgments of Jehovah the proud city of Damascus becomes a "ruinous heap" (ver. 1), the populous towns are pasturage for herds and flocks (ver. 2), the strong places are reduced to utter weakness like the departed glory of Israel (ver. 3); under his judgment Ephraim also shall waste away, shall be as barren as the reaped corn-field, shall be reduced miserably like the tree on whose uppermost branches only a few thin berries can be discovered (vers. 4—6). Under the action of God's righteous laws, the strong nation is thus reduced by sin, from power to weakness, from pride to humiliation, from wealth to poverty, from populousness to depopulation. And it is always *sin* which is the true account of the reduction. Violence may be the immediate cause of overthrow, but violence only succeeds when corruption has brought enfeeblement and decline. Greece fell, not by the Roman sword, but by its own inherent weakness. The fall of Rome was due, not to the might of the barbarians, but to the corruption which sapped it of its strength, and thinned the ranks of its citizens. If England falls at some future day, it will not be because some European power has become irresistible, but because luxury will have bred corruption, and corruption have laid it open to the weapon of its foes. Its fatness will become thin, its strength will be seen only on its uppermost boughs; it will fall a prey to the first strong adversary that assails it.

II. A CHURCH BEREFT OF ITS BEAUTY AND ITS INFLUENCE. Churches do not, usually, suffer loss by the hand of violence. But, by sins of their own, they are often painfully reduced, so that they are as a man whose "fatness has waxed thin," as the field of corn that has been cut, as a tree stripped of its goodly fruit, with nothing left but "two or three berries in the top of the uttermost bough." The enemies which work this waste, which bring this pitiful reduction, are these. 1. *Discord* within the ranks. 2. The spirit of *worldliness*, robbing of devotion and therefore of strength. 3. *Unbelief*, acting as a cancer that cuts off all spiritual nourishment. 4. *Inactivity*, begetting selfishness of aim, and causing the Church to miss that noble exercise which is the source and spring of all moral vigour. The Church that would not be thus wretchedly reduced must sedulously shun these sources of reduction; that one which has to lament its wasted condition must "repent, and do the first works," and the field shall yet be covered with the precious grain, the tree with its clusters of fruit.

III. THE INDIVIDUAL MAN DEPRIVED OF HIS POSITION OR HIS STRENGTH. In

individual instances, the words of the text find illustration.' 1. When the proud, godless man is brought down from his high position; when of all in which he gloried nothing but a few berries on the topmost boughs are left. Let youth shrink from entering on a course which will certainly have this pitiful end; let those who are pursuing it abandon it at the very earliest hour. 2. When death (*the* penalty of sin) intimates its approach, when the leanness and fruitlessness of death are apparent, then let a man ask whether there is life in its fulness and fruitfulness awaiting him on the other shore.—C.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The function of adversity.* I. THE PREVALENCE OF TROUBLE IN THIS WORLD OF SIN. "That day" was the day of national disaster, and, therefore, of individual distress. In the more settled and durable condition of modern times and Western lands, we are much less liable to suffer from this particular cause. But civilization brings its own perils and its own troubles, and while sin lasts "the day" of sorrow will be continually recurring. How many are the sources whence it may spring! Pecuniary embarrassment; disappointment; the loss of kindred or friends, or (what is worse) the loss of their love and their friendship; humiliation; ill health, and the fear of sudden removal from those who are clinging, and perhaps dependent; a sense of guilt before God; a sense of defeat as a Christian aspirant or Christian workman, etc.

II. GOD'S PURPOSE IN SENDING IT. 1. *God does send it.* (See Amos iii. 6.) He directly inflicts it, or he furthers it in his Divine providence, or, at the least, he permits it (see, also, Matt. x. 29). 2. He sends it *to draw us to himself.* (1) To withdraw us from the inferior and the untrustworthy objects; that a man may "*not* look to the altars, the work of his hands;" that we may discover, what we are so slow to learn, that all human help and all earthly securities are insufficient and unavailing; that these things of our own devising and constructing, which our fingers have made, break down in the time of our distress, and leave us "naked to our enemies." (2) To draw us to the mighty and the holy One. Our *Maker* will not want the *power* to redeem us. The *Holy* One of Israel will not fail to *sanctify* to us the evil he has sent us. He draws us to himself that, at his throne of grace, in sacred fellowship with him, we may be drawn to penitence, to trustfulness, to prayerfulness, to the consecration or the rededication of our lives to his service.—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The sin and doom of ungodliness.* We learn—

I. THAT GOD IS WRONGED AND GRIEVED BY OUR NEGLECT OF HIMSELF AS WELL AS BY OUR DISOBEDIENCE TO HIS LAWS. Men sometimes mistakenly suppose that their sin is limited by the number of their transgressions of God's positive enactments. They make a very serious mistake in so judging. Great guilt, indeed, is contracted by the breach of Divine commandment, by setting at defiance the "Thou shalt not" of sacred Scripture. But our obligation strikes deeper far, and, when we fail, our sin includes immeasurably more than this. God *deserves*, and he *desires*, and he even *demands*, that we, his human children, should render to him, himself, all that filial love and fellowship which is due *from* such beloved and enriched ones *to* such a gracious and bountiful Father. His charge against us is not merely that we have done numbers of things which he has prohibited; it is that we have lived on through days, weeks, months, years, through whole periods and stages of our life, and *have forgotten him*, the God of our salvation, have *not been mindful* of him, the Rock of our strength; it is that we have taken blessings and deliverances from his strong, redeeming hand, and have been content to spend our days in ungodliness, withholding the gratitude, the affection, the submission, the willing and joyous service which a relationship so near as is ours to him, and which benefits so great as are his to us, do emphatically demand. The simple and true answer to the question, "What have we failed to render to our redeeming and our beneficent God?" should cover us with shame and send us to our knees in penitence.

II. THAT AN UNGODLY LIFE IS NOT ONLY A PROLONGED INIQUITY, BUT IS ALSO A SUPREME MISTAKE. "Because thou hast forgotten . . . therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants . . . *but the harvest shall be a heap*," etc. The mistake of ungodliness is seen in that: 1. It leaves out and loses all the real nobility from human life—all that which raises man's nature above the brutes', and connects it with the angelic and

Divine. 2. It includes only that which is absolutely insufficient and unsatisfactory. It supplies treasures which the thief can steal, joys which pall and perish, friendships which linger only for a few passing years. It has nothing which *fills* and *satisfies* the human soul, made, as that is made, for heavenly wisdom, for holy service, for the worship and the love of God. Its harvest is only a heap of husks, and not the granary of life-sustaining corn. 3. It makes no provision for the time of trial—for "the day of grief and of desperate sorrow," for the day of death, for the day of judgment.—C.

Vers. 12—14.—*The overthrow of the enemies of God.* I. THAT THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE THE ENEMIES OF GOD HIMSELF. "God will rebuke" those who come up against his people to spoil and to rob them. Those who assail Israel come beneath his ban, and are subject to his "woe." Jesus Christ taught nothing more plainly or emphatically than that they who befriended his disciples were, in his estimation, befriending *him* (Matt. x. 40—42; xxv. 40). It is equally true that those who oppose his friends and disciples are accounted his own enemies. Woe unto him that puts a stumbling-block in the way of any of his "little ones"! To wrong them is to aggrieve him.

II. THAT THEIR WORST SUCCESS IS IN DESPOILING THE HOLY OF THEIR HERITAGE. There is nothing worse that can be said of them than that they are "those that *spoil*, that *rob* us." But the worst despoiling is that which robs the wise and good of their highest heritage, of the excellency which they have in Christ—of peace, of joy, of spiritual integrity, of moral beauty, of helpfulness, of hope.

III. THAT THEY MAKE THEIR ASSAULT WITH EVERY CONFIDENCE OF SUCCESS. The enemies of Israel came on with a "noise like the noise of the seas," like the "rushing of mighty waters," *i.e.* with the dash and daring of those that are bent on carrying everything before them. Sin is often arrogantly confident; it has no belief in the inviolable purity, in the impregnable uprightness, of the people of God. It says with a sneer that every man has his price. It believes that its weapon will pierce any shield, however firm; will slay any soul, however strong. It goes, Goliath-like, confidently to the encounter; the noise of its impudent assurance is in the air.

IV. THAT THEY ARE LIABLE TO BE UTTERLY AND IMMEDIATELY OVERTHROWN. When God rebukes them they "flee far off, and are chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind," etc. "At evening-tide is trouble, and before the morning he is not." So absolutely, so speedily, is the enemy destroyed. Does it accord with our observation that evil is thus suddenly and irremediably cast down? The truth is: 1. That when the fatal blow falls it strikes that which is ripe for destruction. The last blow of the hammer seems to do the work; but, in fact, it succeeds only because all the preceding ones have loosened the particles and made the final stroke effective. So when the decisive judgment comes down from Heaven, it brings irrecoverable ruin because long years of folly and of sin have been preparing for the disaster which ensues. 2. That when God's judgment once overtakes the sinner, it is often found to be that from which there is no escape or recovery. The empire is hopelessly dissolved; the "house" is utterly ruined; the family is scattered, never to be reunited; the fortune is dissipated, never to be repaired; the reputation is blasted, and no labours or severities can restore it; poverty, shame, death, appear and will take no denial; at evening-tide is trouble, and before the morning the worst has happened. (1) Take care to be on God's side; be able to say, "The Lord is on my side," or there will be irretrievable disaster at the end. (2) Remember that Christ identifies himself with his friends. True as it is that those who assail his people will be rebuked of him, it is equally true that they who espouse the cause of his disciples will win his approving smile and his large reward.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The mission of Syria.* Discernment of this mission, so far as it bears upon Israel, and carries religious lessons for all the generations, depends on our understanding the history of the times. Two nations, distant from each other, contended for the country which lay between them. Egypt and Assyria both wanted to be universal world-powers. Had the kingdom of David been kept together, it might have effectively resisted both; but when separated under Jeroboam, and encouraged to cherish rival interests, the southern portion naturally inclined to ally with Egypt, and the northern as naturally allied with Syria to resist the encroachments of Assyria. To the

view of a prophet of the southern kingdom, Syria was the ringleader of a confederacy against Judah, and so against Jehovah and the Jehovah-worship. And to such a Jehovah-prophet, Syria was the agent in tempting the northern kingdom of Israel to forsake even its show of allegiance to Jehovah, and throw in its interest altogether with idolatrous nations. That is the point on which we now dwell. God carries on his work of grace by means of temptations as well as by means of trials; our *testings* of faith, virtue, and obedience are just as truly within the overrulings of God as are our afflictions and our cares. This is taught us in the prologue to the Book of Job, where Satan, the tempter, is represented as appearing among the "sons of God," and receiving Divine commissions. Syria may stand for the associations and circumstances which *tested* the allegiance of Israel to Jehovah; and so for the relationships and conditions of our life, which bring out and prove what really is in our hearts towards the God of our fathers. It is true that God tempts no man in the sense of maliciously enticing him to do evil. It is also true that God tempts every man in the sense of placing him in circumstances under which, while he may fail and fall, he may be confirmed and established in goodness. This view is strikingly supported by a passage in Deut. xiii. 2, 3. The prophet who uses his gift to persuade men to forsake the Lord God is to be rejected, for by such a prophet "the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." All such tempters, whether they be individuals, classes, or nations, come at last under Divine judgments, as Syria did. Syria tempted Israel—

I. By the attractions of its wealth. Damascus was one of the wealthiest of ancient cities, and situated so as to be an important centre of trade. The attraction it proved to Israel may be illustrated by its influence on the luxurious and æsthetical king, Ahaz. Associations of wealthy companions are often serious enticements to youths. The *entrée* of wealthy society makes many a family live beyond its means. The swiftly growing wealth of some business men excites others to grasp at wealth by questionable means.

II. By the attractions of its idolatry. Wealth enabled the expressions and forms of Syrian idolatry to take refined and artistic shapes. These tended to hide the abominations which attend on all idolatrous systems. So, it may be shown in relation to modern times, infidelity offers itself in the garb of advanced knowledge, and immorality appears in the guise of exciting pleasure. Syrian idolatry would have presented but feeble temptation if it had looked as repulsive as it really was. And still we are so often "drawn away and enticed," because Satan can appear to us as an angel of light. Illustrate by the well-known picture "The Pursuit of Pleasure." If Pleasure were not such a lovely syren form, surely the foolish host would not thus vainly pursue her. The practical skill of life is shown in the detection of what a thing *is*, no matter in what form it may *appear*.

III. By the attractions of its alliance. Which seemed to offer security for Israel from the foe which was becoming so dangerously strong. But it was soon proved that Syria was unable to protect itself. Its position exposed it. Its wealth attracted the invader. It was but an arm of flesh, and was powerless when the evil day came. It took Israel away from allegiance to Jehovah and trust in him, and brought on that kingdom, the curse of him who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. As a general application, observe that untried character and untested piety are of little worth. No man can hope to receive the crown of life, save as he is tempted, tried, and proved. That crown belongs only to those who "stand in the evil day."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The Lord's remnant.* Figuratively here is called to mind the fact that God's dealings are never wholly destructive; they never utterly desolate; there is always a mitigation, always a spared remnant. The figure used, of the few olive berries left for the gleaner, is a very striking one, if the customs of the olive-growing countries is understood. In Thomson's 'Land and the Book' there is a full description. "Early in autumn the berries begin to drop off of themselves, or are shaken off by the wind. They are allowed to remain under the trees for some time, guarded by the watchman of the town—a very familiar Bible character. Presently public proclamations are made that the owners may gather the fruit. And in November comes the general and final summons. No olives are now safe unless the owner looks after them, for the watchmen

are removed, and the orchards are alive with men, women, and children. It is a merry time, and the laugh and the song echo far and wide. Everywhere the people are in the trees, 'shaking' them with all their might, to bring down the fruit. The effort is to make a clear sweep of all the crop; but in spite of shaking and beating, there is always a gleaning left—'two or three berries in the top of the uttermost boughs, four or five in the outermost fruitful branches.' These are afterwards gleaned up by the very poor, who have no trees of their own." Matthew Henry well expresses the thought to which this figure directs us: "Mercy is here reserved, in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none should slip out of their net, yet the meek of the earth were hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey, and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts." God's remnants are illustrated in the Flood; fate of Sodom; Captivity; Elijah's time; and siege by the Romans of Jerusalem. Always there has been "a remnant according to the election of grace." This remnant has shown in every age that God's judgments are never—

I. VINDICTIVE. They are always, and for every one—

II. DISCIPLINARY. And they are so mitigated as—

III. NEVER TO CRUSH OUT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Eyes turned to God only.* Cheyne's translation is, "In that day shall the earth-born look towards his Maker, and his eyes shall have regard to the Holy One of Israel." The reference seems to be to those who, after the Assyrian conquest of Israel accepted Hezekiah's invitation, returned to Jerusalem, giving up their confidence in idols, and looking with single eye to Jehovah, and serving him with sincere hearts. The figure suggests for consideration the possible attitudes of human vision towards God.

I. THERE IS THE BLINDED VISION. Two things blind: 1. Ignorance, as illustrated in the case of the heathen. 2. Wilfulness, as illustrated in all who are living in sin. The one blindness is a calamity, calling forth our pity; the other is a crime, calling for our indignation. There is also a judicial blindness—the stroke of God upon those who have misused their eyesight, keeping it fixed on vanity, not lifted up to the heavens, "from whence cometh man's help." They who *will* not see shall not be able to see.

II. THERE IS THE DIMMED VISION. Influenced by surrounding atmospheres of (1) thought; (2) social custom; (3) familiar errors. Nowadays men are sadly suffering from dimmed vision. Fogs of prevailing unbelief are for a time half hiding God, and even Christians are troubled lest the dimness should prove to be in their eyes. The evil is only in the medium through which the eye looks.

III. THERE IS THE DIVIDED VISION. Which can see both God and self, and tries hard to keep both, side by side, in the field. Of some in the olden times it was said, "They feared the Lord, and served other gods;" and this must be the description of very many in the modern. "Their heart is divided." They cannot see "Jesus only."

IV. THERE IS THE CLEARED VISION. Oftentimes cleansed and purified by the medicine of affliction, as in the association of the text. God's chastisements are his teaching us to *see*.

V. THERE IS THE CONCENTRATED VISION. Eyes turned to God *only*. The sign of entire devotement; full consecration. An eye single, and fixed on one object. This one thing I will do, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills." Plead the call and persuasion of the risen and living Christ, "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*God our Rock.* Here called the "Rock of thy fortress;" and contrasting with the fortress-cities, which proved no defence, and the fortress-rocks, in which the refugees had found safe shelter. The *city* represented man's power to defend; the *rock* represents God's power. According to the circumstances of the age, and in view of the machinery of war then in use, the steep rock was a better safety than the walled city. The figure of God as a Rock is found very early in Scripture, and was perhaps associated with the fact of God's revealing himself from the mount, or rock, of Sinai. Moses

pleads in striking similarity with Isaiah, saying, "Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation;" "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee" (Deut. xxxii. 15, 18).

I. MAN'S PERILS AS A MORAL BEING. These can be illustrated from the evils and the perils of social and national life. They can be opened out fully under three headings: (1) intellectual; (2) moral; (3) religious.

II. FOR SUCH PERILS MAN CAN NEVER PROVIDE EFFICIENT DEFENCES. Intellectual safeguards fail before the subtleties of aggressive unbelief. Moral safeguards fail before the uprising swell of passions. Formal religious safeguards fail to satisfy when heart begins to cry. In the dangerous ways of an earth full of temptation and evil, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

III. MAN'S SAFETY FROM ALL PERILS IS IN GOD HIS ROCK. *On* God a man may stand secure, though the wild storm-waves beat around him. *In* God a man may hide quite safely until all the calamities be overpast. His house may feel the blowing of the mighty winds; but it falls not, for it is founded on a rock.

"God is my strong Salvation;
What foe have I to fear?
In darkness and temptation,
My Light, my Help, is near.
Though hosts encamp around me,
Firm to the fight I stand;
What terror can confound me,
With God at my right hand?"

R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The mission of disappointment; or, disappointment used as a Divine judgment.* In this passage is presented the case of unrewarded toil. Seed is sown, blades spring up, there is every prospect of harvest; but all hopes are disappointed, the harvest proved a failure—it was "a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow." One special feature of the discipline of life is the disappointment of our most cherished hopes and expectations. We build our castles on some new enterprise, and at first all seems to go well; but at last our castle lies in ruins about us. We set our hopes on one of our children, and fashion for him a future of honour and success, and our disappointment in him almost breaks our heart. We make important changes, which promise much, and result in the humiliation of failure and distress. God works by disappointments; they are keener rods for smiting than afflictions are. They bear more quickly on the humbling of man's pride and on the conviction of his self-helplessness. They try temper more. They too often result in hardening and increased wilfulness. There is no harder lesson for us to learn than this one, that God works his work of grace by shutting doors against us, and not permitting us to achieve the success which is the desire of our heart. We plan, we work, but all proves in vain; and so we learn that it is the blessing of the Lord alone that maketh rich, and giveth good success. We observe—

I. DISAPPOINTMENT DIFFERS FROM AFFLICTION. Take two scenes from David's life. The rebellion of Absalom was an *affliction*. The refusal to permit him to build the temple was a *disappointment*. The one was no more under God's overruling than was the other. They are perfectly distinct in character and in influence. One difference may be effectively illustrated. With "afflictions" there is usually an enfeebled and depressed state of body, involving weakened will and limitation of resistance. With "disappointments" there is usually the full health and energy; and the conflict, that ends in true submission, is therefore more severe.

II. DISAPPOINTMENTS MAY INFLUENCE WHEN AFFLICTIONS WOULD NOT. That depends on dispositions. Many a man can bear sufferings who would be thrown into the most violent struggles by having his will crossed. Then that "crossing of his will" may be the only way to accomplish his sanctifying. We should rejoice that he who knows the best methods of chastisement also knows *us* on whom the correction comes. For us the way to heaven may be round by a series of lifelong disappointments. Most persons, perhaps, looking back over their lives, would say that their bitterest hours were those in which they realized that they "could not do the things that they would."

St. Paul knew such times. The story of one such is very simply told, but those who read between the lines may find indication of much feeling. "We assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered us not." And it is not easy to estimate the educational influence on our Lord's disciples of that overwhelming disappointment, which came when he who they thought should have redeemed Israel was "hung up and crucified." That may be just the kind of weapon which our heavenly Father may need for our correction; and, in our various disappointments, we may hear his gracious voice saying, "Should it be according to thy mind?"—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Vers. 1—7.—THE HOMAGE OF ETHIOPIA TO JEHOVAH. Amid the general excitement caused by the advance of Assyria, Ethiopia also is stirred, and stirred to its furthest limits. The king sends messengers in boats upon the canals and rivers to summon his troops to his standard (vers. 1, 2). The earth stands agaze to see the result of the approaching collision (ver. 3); but God rests calmly in heaven while events are ripening (vers. 4, 5). When the time comes he will strike the blow—Assyria will be given to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field (ver. 6). Then Ethiopia will make an act of homage to Jehovah by the sending of a present to Jerusalem (ver. 7). The time seems to be that immediately preceding the great invasion of Sennacherib (about B.C. 700), when Shabatok the Ethiopian was King of Egypt, and Tirhakah (Tahark) either Crown Prince under him, or more probably Lord Paramount of Egypt over him, and reigning at Napata.

Ver. 1.—**Woe to the land**; rather, *Ho for the land!* (comp. ch. xvii. 12). **Shadowing with wings**; literally, either *the land of the shadow of wings* or *the land of the noise of wings*, most probably the latter. Allusion is thought to be made to the swarms of buzzing flies, especially the tsetse, with which Ethiopia abounds. At the same time, these swarms are, perhaps, intended to be taken as emblems of the hosts of warriors which Ethiopia can send forth (comp. ch. vii. 18). **Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.** The prophet cannot be supposed to have had more than a vague knowledge of African geography. He seems, however, to be aware that Ethiopia is a land of many rivers (see Baker's 'Nile Tributaries'), and he assumes that the dominion of the Ethiopian kings extends even beyond these rivers to the south of them. His object is, as Mr. Cheyne says, "to emphasize the greatness of Ethiopia." It may be questioned, however, whether the dominion of the Ethiopian kings of the time extended so far as he supposed. The seat of their power was Napata, now *Gebel Berkal*, in the great bend of the Nile between lat. 18° and 19° N.; and its southern limit was probably Khartoum and the line of the Blue Nile (see Rawlinson's 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 436).

Ver. 2.—**That sendeth ambassadors**; rather, perhaps, *messengers*, as the word is translated in ch. lvii. 9 and Prov. xxv. 13. They are sent, apparently, by the king to his own people. **By the sea.** "The sea" must in this place necessarily mean the Nile, which is called "the sea" in Nah. iii. 8 certainly, and probably in ch. xix. 5. Vessels of papyrus could not possibly have been employed in the very difficult navigation of the Red Sea. **Vessels of bulrushes.** That some of the boats used upon the Nile were constructed of the papyrus (which is a sort of bulrush) we learn from Herodotus (ii. 96), Theophrastus ('Hist. Plant.,' iv. 9), Plutarch ('De Isid. et Osir.,' § 18), Pliny ('Hist. Nat.,' vi. 22), and Lucan ('Pharsal.,' iv. 136). They are represented occasionally on the Egyptian monuments. *Saying.* This word is interpolated by our translators, and gives a wrong sense. It is the prophet that addresses the messengers, not the king who sends them. **To a nation scattered and peeled**; rather, *tall and polished*, or *tall and sleek.* The word translated "scattered" means properly "drawn out," and seems to be applied here to the physique of the Ethiopians, whose stature is said to have been remarkable (Herod., iii. 20, 114). The other epithet refers to the glossy skin of the people. **A people terrible from their beginning hitherto.** The Israelites first knew the Ethiopians as soldiers when they formed a part of the army brought by Shishak (Sheshonk I.) against Rehoboam, about B.C. 970 (2 Chron. xii. 3). They had afterwards experience of their vast numbers, when Zerah made his attack upon Asa; but on this occasion they succeeded in defeating them (2 Chron. xiv. 9—13). It was not till about two centuries after this that the power of Ethiopia began to be really formidable to Egypt; and the "miserable Cushites," as they had been in the habit of calling them, acquired the pre-

ponderating influence in the valley of the Nile, and under Piankhi, Shabak, Shabatok, and Tirhakah (Tahark), reduced Egypt to subjection. Isaiah, perhaps, refers to their rise under Piankhi as "their beginning." **A nation meted out and trodden down**; rather, *a nation of meting out and trampling*; i.e. one accustomed to mete out its neighbours' bounds with a measuring-line, and to trample other nations under its feet. **Whose land the rivers have spoiled**; rather, *whose land rivers despoil*. The deposit of mud, which fertilizes Egypt, is washed by the rivers from Ethiopia, which is thus continually losing large quantities of rich soil. This fact was well known to the Greeks (Herod., ii. 12, *ad fin.*), and there is no reason why Isaiah should not have been acquainted with it.

Ver. 3.—**All ye inhabitants of the world.** From exhorting the messengers to hasten on their errand, Isaiah turns to the nations generally, and bids them attend to a coming signal—an ensign is about to be raised, a trumpet is about to be sounded—let them gaze and hearken; the result will be well worth noting. The imagery is not to be taken literally, but in the same way as the notices in ch. xi. 10, 12; xiii. 2. **When he lifteth up an ensign . . . when he bloweth a trumpet**; rather, *when an ensign is lifted up . . . when a trumpet sounds*. **On the mountains.** Wherever the great event took place, the signal for it was given on the mountains of Judæa (see 2 Kings xix. 20—34).

Ver. 4.—**For so**; rather, *for thus*. The word *kôh* is prospective. **I will take my rest, and I will consider**; or, *I will be still and look on*. The rest of God is contrasted with the bustle and hurry of the Ethiopians and Assyrians. God "sits in his holy seat," calm and tranquil, knowing what the result is about to be, and when it will be; he waits while the influences of heat and moisture, sunshine and dew—his own agencies—ripen Assyria's schemes, impassive, taking no part. Then, suddenly, he takes the part described in the latter portion of ver. 5, "cuts off the shoots and hews down the branches." **Like a clear heat upon herbs**, etc.; rather, *while there is clear heat in the sunshine, while there is a cloud of dew in the harvest-warmth*; i.e. while surrounding influences are such as must favour the growth of Assyria's power and pride.

Ver. 5.—**For afore the harvest.** God can rest thus tranquil, because he can step in at any time; and this he is about to do, before Assyria reaps her harvest. **When the bud is perfect**, etc.; rather, *when the blossom is past, and the green grape is becoming a ripening bunch*. **He shall cut off** (comp. ch. x. 33, 34). The metaphor is slightly varied in this place, to suit the imagery of the preceding clause, where Assyria has been represented as a vine-stock. Formerly her "boughs" were to be "lopped;" now her "branches" and "sprigs" or "sprouts" are to be cut away with pruning-hooks.

Ver. 6.—**They shall be left together unto the fowls.** At length imagery is dropped. The vine is shown to be an army, slaughtered all "together," and left a prey to kites and vultures, jackals and hyænas. **Shall summer . . . shall winter.** They will furnish food to the beasts and birds of prey for the remainder of the year.

Ver. 7.—**In that time shall the present be brought**; rather, *a present*. It would not be at all improbable that Tirkakah should, after the destruction of Sennacherib's army, send a gift to the temple of the Jews, either as a recognition of the miracle as wrought by Jehovah, or simply as a thank offering. Necho sent the armour in which he had fought at Megiddo to the temple of Apollo at Branchidæ, near Miletus, as a thank offering (Herod., ii. 159). We have, however, no historical record of Tirkakah's present as sent. **Of a people**; rather, *from a people* (compare the next clause, which supplies the ellipse of the preposition). (For the rest of the verse, see notes on ver. 2.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The contrast of Divine calm with human bustle, hurry, and excitement.* When men take a matter in hand wherein they feel an interest, and set themselves either to carry out a certain design of their own, or to frustrate the designs of others, nothing is more remarkable than (if we may use a vulgarism) the "fuss" that they make about it. Heaven and earth are moved, so to speak, for the accomplishment of the desired end; the entire nation is excited, stirred, thrilled to its lowest depths; a universal eagerness prevails; all is noise, clamour, haste, bustle, tumult, whirl, confusion. Assyria's "noise" is compared (ch. xvii. 12) to the roar of the sea, and the rushing of mighty waters. Ethiopia's stir is like the sound of many wings (ch. xviii. 1). Even Cyrus, though he has a Divine mission, cannot set about it without "the noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together" (ch. xiii. 4). It is in vain that men are told

to "stand still and see the salvation of God" (Exod. xiv. 13), or admonished that "in quietness and confidence should be their strength" (ch. xxx. 15); they cannot bring themselves to act on the advice tendered. Great minds indeed are comparatively quiet and tranquil; but even they are liable upon occasion to be swept away by the prevailing wave of excited feeling, and dragged, as it were, from their moorings into a turbid ocean. And the mass of mankind is wholly without calm or stability. It trembles, flutters, rushes hither and thither, mistakes activity for energy, and "fussiness" for the power of achievement. This condition of things results from three weaknesses in man: 1. His want of patience. 2. His want of confidence in himself. 3. His want of confidence in God.

I. MAN'S WANT OF PATIENCE. Man desires to obtain whatever end he sets himself *at once*. The boy is impatient to be grown up, the subaltern would at once be a general, the clerk a partner, the student a professor of his science. Men "make haste to be rich" (Prov. xxviii. 20), and overshoot the mark, and fall back into poverty. They strive to become world-famous when they are mere tyros, and put forth ambitious writings which only show their ignorance. They fail to recognize the force of the proverb, that "everything comes to those who wait." To toil long, to persevere, to make a small advance day after day—this seems to them a poor thing, an unsatisfactory mode of procedure. They would reach the end *per saltum*, "by a bound." Hence their haste. Too often "most haste is worst speed." "Vaulting ambition doth o'erleap itself, and falls on the other side."

II. MAN'S WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF. He who is sure of himself can afford to wait. He knows that he will succeed in the end; what matters whether a little sooner or a little later? But the bulk of men are not sure of themselves; they misdoubt their powers, capacities, perseverance, steadiness, reserve fund of energy. Hence their spasmodic efforts, hurried movements, violent agitations, frantic rushings hither and thither. If they do not gain their end at once, they despair of ever attaining it. They are conscious of infinite weakness in themselves, and feel that they cannot tell what a day may bring forth in the way of defeat and disappointment. They say that it is necessary to strike while the iron is hot; but their real reason for haste is that they question whether their ability to strike will not have passed away if they delay ever so little.

III. MAN'S WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD. He who feels that God is on his side has no need to disquiet himself. He will not fear the powers of darkness; he will not be afraid of what flesh can do unto him. But comparatively few men have this feeling. Either they put the thoughts of God altogether away from them, or they view him as an enemy, or they misdoubt, at any rate, his sympathy with themselves. Mostly they feel that they do not deserve his sympathy. They cannot "rest in the Lord," and they cannot find rest outside of him. Hence they remain in perpetual disturbance and unrest. Strangely in contrast with man's unquiet is God's immovable calm and unruffled tranquillity. "The Lord said, I will take my rest" (ver. 4). None can really resist his will, and hence he has no need to trouble himself if resistance is attempted. "The fierceness of man" will always "turn to his praise." Time is no object with him who is above time, "whose goings have been from the days of eternity" (Micah v. 2). In silence and calm he accomplishes his everlasting purposes. Himself at rest in the still depths of his unchangeable nature, it is he alone who can give his creatures rest. As they grow more like to him, they will grow more and more tranquil, until the time comes when they will enter finally into that rest which "remaineth for his people" (Heb. iv. 9).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Homage of Ethiopia to Jehovah.* I. AGITATION IN ETHIOPIA. The oracle opens with a scene full of life. Hosts of Egyptian and Ethiopian warriors are seen, like buzzing swarms of flies moving to and fro. Messengers are speeding in papyrus boats to announce the approach of the Assyrians. The Ethiopians are described as a nation "tall and polished," terrible, strong, and all-subduing, whose land rivers cut through. A sense of mystery and greatness hung about this land from the earliest times—the land of the source of the Nile, opened up by our countryman Speke and

others. The prophet lifts up his voice to this people. A signal will be seen on the mountains, the blast of a trumpet will be heard. There will be symptoms of the Divine presence, restraining, overruling the wrath of men for ends of Divine wisdom. "When wars are carried on, every one sees clearly what is done; but the greater part of men ascribe the beginning and end of them to chance. On the other hand, Isaiah shows that all these things ought to be ascribed to God, because he will display his power in a new and extraordinary manner; for sometimes he works so as to conceal his hand, and to prevent his work from being perceived by men, but sometimes he displays his hand in it in such a manner that all men are constrained to acknowledge it; and that is what the prophet meant" (Calvin),

II. THE WAITING OF JEHOVAH. Impressive is the contrast between the noise and stir and agitation below, and the calmness above. Jehovah "will be still"—as the blue sky behind a moving host of clouds, above a surging sea below. In the second psalm we have the picture of him sitting in the heavens and "laughing" at the vain attempts of the enemies of the Messianic kingdom. There are three thoughts here. 1. *The repose of God.* It seems as if we must ever contemplate him resting from his toils of designing and creating and providing—entered on an eternal sabbath. The consciousness of vast force, sleeping, held in reserve, we must conceive of in God. Hence his stillness amidst our excitement. At times when vague movements are passing through the bosom of society, many voices rend the air with opposing cries, deep questions agitate the heart and conscience of thoughtful men. We long to hear the one infallible voice, to see the signal extended; and yet "God speaks not a word." Perhaps it may be said, a still small voice, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God!" may be heard by acuter spiritual ears. His stillness must be the effect of infinite strength and profoundest confidence. 2. *His contemplativeness.* He "looks on in his mansion." Not as the Epicureans represented the gods of the heathen, sitting apart, reckless of the weal or woe of men; but intently watchful of the development of things, the ripening of good, the gathering up of evil towards the day of sifting and judgment. In a powerful biblical image, "his eyes are in every place, beholding the good and the evil." And our thought, to be in harmony with his, must in many matters and at many times fall into the mood of contemplation. Instead of seeking to theorize rashly upon the strange mixture of tendencies life at any troubled epoch presents, it were well to possess our souls in patience—to look on and "let both grow together till the harvest." 3. *His waiting attitude.* "While there is clear heat in sunshine, while there are clouds of dew in harvest-heat," he is waiting till "the fruit of Assyrian annoyance is all but ripe." The heat and the clouds of dew hasten the powers in nature; there are corresponding forces at work in the moral world, seen by him to be working towards certain results. *God can wait because he knows.* And may not we in a measure compose our souls into that attitude of waiting? Some things we, too, know; about many others we can say, "God knows," and so leave them. Especially so in times or in moods of alarm. In the present case men below see one picture of the future; quite another is seen by God above. To them a vast black cloud is gathering over the horizon; he sees the sun that will presently smite it asunder. They see a fell harvest of woe for themselves ripening; he has the pruning-knife in his hand, with which he will make havoc among the growth. They see an immense host of irresistible warriors; he the birds of prey and the beasts that will soon be feeding upon their remains. Let us think of the immense reserves of force at the disposal of Jehovah. The statesman, in times of alarm, assures a trembling country that the "resources of civilization" are not yet exhausted; yet they have their limit. Behind them lie the absolutely inexhaustible resources of the living and eternal God. Let our hearts be stayed on him, and all will be well.

III. THE EFFECT ON ETHIOPIA. They will bring a tribute to Jehovah Sabaoth, to the Lord of hosts, in his seat on Mount Zion. It is he who has done these things. We find the like impressive picture passing before a prophetic eye in Ps. lxviii. 32: "Kingdoms of splendour come out of Egypt, Ethiopia stretches out her hands to God." The gathering of so glorious a people into the true Church is to be the result of the manifestation of the power of Israel's God.

LESSONS. 1. *The providence of God over the Church.* "He shows that he takes care of the Church, and that, though he determines to chastise it, still he comes forward at the proper season to hinder it from perishing, and displays his power in opposition to

tyrants and other enemies, that they may not overthrow it or succeed in accomplishing what they imagined to be in their powers. In order, therefore, to excite them to patience, he not only distinguishes them from the Ethiopians, but likewise reminds them that God mitigates his judgments for their preservation" (Calvin). 2. *The indestructibility of the spiritual life.* This must not be confounded with the institutions in which it dwells for a time. But, understanding the "Church" in the spiritual or mystical sense, it cannot perish. Calvin wrote in his day, "The Church is not far from despair, being plundered, scattered, and everywhere crushed and trodden underfoot. What must be done in straits so numerous and so distressing? We ought to lay hold on these promises so as to believe that God will still preserve the Church. The body may be torn, shivered into fragments and scattered; still, by his Spirit, he will easily unite the members, and will never allow the remembrance and calling on his Name to perish." 3. *The self-concealment of God.* The trial of faith in all ages. Oh that he would show his face, bare his arm, disclose his majesty, exert his power, appear as Judge to end once for all the strifes of the world! But we must learn to say, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." At the proper season he will come forth. "If he instantly cut the wicked down and took them away like a sprouting blade of corn, his power would not be so manifest, nor would his goodness be so fully ascertained, as when he permits them to grow to a vast height, to swell and blossom, that they may afterwards fall by their own weight, or, like large and fat ears of corn, cuts them down with pruning-knives." 4. *The unity of religion the prophetic ideal.* "Mount Zion" was its ancient symbol; for us it is not Rome, nor any other city or mount,—it is the human heart, with all its pathos, its faith, hope, and love, its regenerate life and aspirations, it is one spirit universal in mankind.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The patience of power.* The most striking and distinctive truth this chapter contains is that of the patience of Divine power, which permits evil to rise and to mature, and which, at the right moment, effectually intervenes. But there are other points beside this; they are—

I. THE MISDIRECTION OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. Whatever may be the right translation and the true application of these verses, it is clear that reference is made to a warlike people—a people "terrible" to their neighbours, a people "of command" or "treading underfoot," aggressive and victorious. It shows how far we have fallen from our first estate and from the condition for which we were created, that it does not strike us as strange that *this should be* the description of a people; that the number of nations whom it characterizes is so great that we fail to identify the nation which is in the prophet's vision. Under sin it has become common, not to say natural, that a nation should be "terrible," should be treading down or crushing, and full of commands to its neighbours. But to how much better purpose might the strong peoples of the earth devote their strength! God has made rich provision for the peaceable and fruitful exercise of our largest powers. There are rivers and seas (ver. 2) for travelling, exploration, commerce; there is vegetation (bulrushes, papyrus), which may be made to carry men's bodies, or which, by the exercise of human ingenuity, may be made to convey their thoughts to distant lands and remotest times; there is land and there are seeds, there is sunshine and there is dew, which can be made to produce golden harvests that will satisfy man's wants and minister to his most refined tastes (vers. 4, 5); there are birds and beasts (ver. 6), with whose habits men may become intelligently familiar; there is wealth beneath the soil in precious metals, which can not only be raised and collected to enrich the homes of men, but which can be conveyed, as the tribute of piety, to the house of the Lord (ver. 7). But, despising and neglecting such materials and such ambitions as these, nations have aspired to rule over others—have perfected themselves in all the arts and enginery of war, have congratulated themselves on nothing so much as in being "terrible" to those on the other side the river or across the mountain range.

II. THE COMPLETENESS OF MAN'S OVERTHROW IN THE DAY OF DIVINE ANGER. The destruction threatened (vers. 5, 6) probably refers to that of the army of Sennacherib; but if the reference be to some other national calamity, it certainly points to an overthrow, signal and fearful, from which the imagination turns away oppressed. So has it been found, both by individual men and nations, that when God arises to judgment,

their feeble defences are scattered to the winds, and their doom is utterly irreversible by anything they can do to mend it (see Ps. ii.; lxiii. 17—20; xcii. 6, 9).

III. THE LESSON OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS. The result in this case is seen in the bringing of a tribute to the Lord (ver. 7). If God puts forth his power in overwhelming retribution, it is, chiefly if not wholly, that they who witness it (men or nations) may repent of their own misdeeds or impiety, and may return unto the Lord in penitence, in prayer, in consecration; for the most acceptable "present" that can be "brought unto the Lord of hosts" is the humbled, believing, obedient heart.

IV. THE PATIENCE OF DIVINE POWER. (Ver. 4.) The Lord said, "I will take my rest [I will be calm or still], I will consider in my dwelling-place [I will look on from my habitation] like a clear heat upon herbs, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." God will not be provoked into hurried and impatient judgments; he will retain a Divine composure, he will manifest the patience which belongs to conscious power; the heavens should be as still as on the calmest summer day while evil was working to its bitter end, while sin was advancing to its doom. Here is a contrast to us and here are lessons for us. We, in our finite feebleness, are often impatient in spirit and hurried in action. We are afraid that, if we do not strike at once, we shall not have time to strike at all, or that our resources of retribution will fail, or that our adversary will be out of our reach. God can entertain no such fear and be affected by no such thought. 1. All time is at his command. 2. All resources are in his hands. 3. The men (nations) whom he may find it needful to chastise can never be beyond the reach of his power. Hence his calmness in place of our confusion, his patience in contrast with our feverish restlessness. (1) Let not the wicked presume on Divine disregard; God will put forth his hand in punishment at his own chosen time. (2) Let not the righteous be surprised or disheartened by his delay; he does not count time by our chronometry; he has not the reasons for haste which urge us to immediate action; the hour of his merciful intervention will arrive in time.—C.

Ver. 1.—*Man's energy put in place of trust in God.* This comes to view in a more precise translation of the passage. The King of Ethiopia, who was nominally also King of Egypt, alarmed by the near approach of the Assyrians, is aroused to the exhibition of great energy, and sends messengers in the light river-vessels to spread the news through the empire as rapidly as possible, and call the troops of all his dependent nations to his standard. Geikie translates, or paraphrases the passage thus: "O land of the buzz of fly-swarms—emblems of countless armies—by the rivers of Ethiopia, which art sending messengers upon the seas, and in swift, light, papyrus boats along all your waters, to gather allies, and muster all the force of your empire: Go back to your homes, ye swift messengers—go back to Ethiopia—the tall and strong race, terrible in war from their rise till now,—the nation very strong and all-subduing, whose land is seamed with rivers! Jehovah, alone, will destroy the invader!" The energy of the Ethiopian king is so far commended, but the prophet urges that in this case it is not needed, for God proposes to take to himself all the glory of driving back the Assyrian invasion.

I. MAN'S ENERGY IS CALLED FOR. Whatsoever a man findeth to do he should do "with his might," "heartily." Success in life greatly depends on the strength and vigour in our touch of life's duties and claims. Energy includes strength of will, decision, promptness, perseverance, power to overcome obstacles and hindrances, and fertility of resources. Energy is the quality most commended in business life; and it is found to make up for the absence of actual abilities. The man of energy compels life to yield him some of its best. It is thought of as a characteristic of American business life, and is illustrated in the man who put together the blackened rafters and boards of his burnt warehouse, and commenced business again before the great fire was fully quenched, putting up this for a sign, "William D. Kerfoot; all gone, save wife, children, *and energy*." However much this energy may be a peculiarity of individual disposition, it is also subject to culture, and may be nourished into strength by a firm self-mastery of our life and habits. Exercise thyself thereunto.

II. MAN'S ENERGY IS CONSISTENT WITH DEPENDENCE ON GOD. Only the weak man fails to make *try* harmonize with *trust*. Here the point may be fully argued and illustrated, that the submission which God seeks is no slavish lying down to bear,

which is the Islâm, or submission of Mohammedanism, but the submission of an active and cheerful obedience, which expects God's will to be *doing* rather than *bearing*, and carries a noble spirit of watching for God and waiting on him, into every detail of life. To suffer and submit is no very great triumph; to carry the spirit of submission at the heart of our work is the sublime victory of Christian life. And just this is the glory of the energy illustrated in the Apostle Paul. To men's view "beside himself;" his secret this, "To me to live is Christ."

III. MAN'S ENERGY MUST NEVER BE PUT IN THE PLACE OF GOD. But just in this the worldly man is constantly failing. "This is great Babylon, which *I* have builded." "*I* will pull down my barns and build greater." "See this business which *I* have established." "*My* might, and the strength of *my* arm, have gotten me this victory. Nothing tends more readily to separate a man from God, and God from a man, than life success attending energy. And of this great peril the Christian man needs to beware. Even he may find that he has dethroned God from the rule of his life, and raised up in his place the old idol of self, dressed in the garments of "energy."

IV. SOMETIMES MAN'S ENERGY MUST BE PUT ASIDE, THAT GOD ALONE MAY WORK. As in this case, the Ethiopian king must stop his hurrying messengers, and be still; for Jehovah would work the needed rescue. There are times in our lives when we cannot work, when we must not work; and in those times we learn how to put energy and enterprise into their right place. God puts us in his school, and teaches us the hard lesson of practically uniting "energy" with "dependence." And yet this is but the same lesson as joining harmoniously together "faith" and "works;" or, as the apostle expresses it, "working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God can wait.* "I will rest." God was apparently inactive and unobservant, while the Assyrian was maturing his plans and taking all his first steps. But God watches the influences gathering round the growing-time of the trees, though men trace his working almost only in their fruitage. The words of this passage "paint with marvellous vividness the calmness and deliberation of the workings of Divine judgments. God is at once unhasting and unresting. He dwells in his resting-place (*i.e.* his palace or throne) and watches the ripening of the fruit which he is about to gather. While there is a clear heat in sunshine, while there is a dew-cloud in harvest-heat, through all phenomenal changes, he waits still" (Dean Plumptre). The figure of a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest is well illustrated by Thomson, in 'The Land and the Book,' who writes of a cloud which "absolutely *reposed* upon the vast harvest-fields of Philistia, lying on the corn serene and quiet as infancy asleep. I have never seen such a cloud in this country except in the heat of harvest." Cheyne brings out the point of this verse. "In the midst of all the excitement, of the Assyrians on the one hand, and of the Ethiopians on the other, Jehovah is calmly waiting till the fruit of Assyrian arrogance is all but ripe. Favouring circumstances are hastening the process (clear heat, etc.), and when perfection seems just within reach, God will interpose in judgment." God can wait—quietly wait—until the fulness of time has come. God reproaches our restlessness by his example, for our time is "always ready," and by our impatience and failure in self-control we spoil a thousand things. This subject may be opened in the following way.

I. IN SECURING MATERIAL ENDS THERE IS OFTEN GREAT NEED FOR WAITING. Illustrate from the failure of the general, because he did not wait until preparations were complete; or from the farmer who loses his crops by cutting them too soon, before the weather has become settled; or the artist who cannot wait to give his work the perfecting touches of his own criticism; or the pastor who injures the young blade by worrying anxiety over it, and cannot wait to let young soul-life gather quiet strength in its own simple ways. The wisdom of waiting is harder to learn and practise than the wisdom of acting and working. Yet the motto, by no means untruthfully, says, "All things come round to him who can wait."

II. IN SECURING MORAL ENDS THERE IS OFTEN ABSOLUTE NEED FOR WAITING. Because moral processes can never bear forcing. They vary in different individuals. The lesson of virtue which one person learns at once, another grasps only as a final result of the training of a long life. This point may be opened up in relation to the

work of mothers and teachers. They seek moral ends. They are often distressed by the slowness of the approach to the end. They must learn the importance of active, watchful *waiting*. And in the highest sense, in relation to God's moral working, we all need to hear the voice that pleads, "Wait thou his time." Marvellous is the long-suffering patience of him who waited while the ark was building, and waited through the ages until the "fulness of times" for his Christ had come.

III. IN MAN WAITING MAY BE EITHER STRENGTH OR WEAKNESS. It may be "masterly inactivity," and it may be that "procrastination" which loses golden opportunities.

IV. IN GOD WAITING IS ALWAYS WISDOM AND STRENGTH. So we never need fret under it, or make mystery of it, or think untrustful things about it. God acts on the absolutely best moment, and we should wait on for ages, and never want a thing until God's best moment for it has come. Because God can wait, we should trust.—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*God can work.* When his time has come. Then, before man can do his harvesting-work; when the blossoming and the growing times are over, through which God had waited; when the fruit becomes the full ripe grape,—then God will show how he can *work*, putting in his implements, and proving himself to be a Deliverer and a Judge. God's working here referred to is doubtless the sudden, unexpected, and complete overthrow of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, which came at the time when it would prove absolutely overwhelming, and perfectly effective as a deliverance. Matthew Henry states the case in this way: "When the Assyrian army promises itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem and the plundering of that rich city, when the bud of that project is perfect, before the harvest is gathered in, while the sour grape of their enmity to Hezekiah and his people is ripening in the flower, and the design is just ready to be put into execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the vine with pruning-hooks, or because the grape is sour and good for nothing, and will not be cured, takes away and cuts down the branches. This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel, when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces."

I. GOD'S WORKING IS WELL-TIMED. This is the point made specially prominent here. What was needed, for the due impression of Judah and the surrounding nations, was some startling deliverance; something that should be at once complete, and yet should be manifestly beyond man's accomplishing. Such a working must be exactly timed. When the success of Assyria seemed assured, when its prey seemed within its grasp, and when men's hearts were failing them for fear,—just then the wild hot Simoom blast swept over the army, and as in a moment there were heaps of dead men, and few escaped to tell the awful story. For the timeliness of God's judgment-workings find illustration in the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, the extirpation of the Canaanites, the captivities, and the final siege of Jerusalem.

II. GOD'S WORKING IS FULL OF ENERGY. Ever setting before us the example of thoroughness in the doing of whatever work has to be done. This is in great part the reason why, in making Israel his executioner, God required Israel to treat everything belonging to the Canaanites as accursed, and doomed to destruction. It was, for the first ages, a Divine lesson in thoroughness, energy, and promptitude. God never works with a slack hand, and his servants must not.

III. GOD'S WORKING IS ALWAYS EFFECTIVE TO ITS END. And that, not because it is *almighty* working, so much as because it is *all-wise* working. Power is quite a secondary thing to adaptation. A thing fitted to its end will accomplish it, and it will be accomplished better through the fitness than by any displays of power. The end here designed was an adequate impression of the sole and sovereign rights of Jehovah, and a loud call to the nations to put their trust in him. The overthrow of a mighty army, in the fulness of its pride, by purely natural—which are purely Divine—forces, was exactly adapted to secure this end. Illustrate by the moral impression produced by great and destructive earthquakes. When the end of God's working is the persuasion of his fatherly love, then we find his means marvellously adapted and effective. "He gave his Son, his only begotten Son." And herein we say is love, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our

sins." Be it work of judgment or work of mercy, of this we may be quite sure—God accomplishes that which he pleases, and his work prospers in that to which he sends it.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIX.

Vers. 1—17.—THE BURDEN OF EGYPT. It has been doubted whether this prophecy refers to the conquest of Egypt by Piankhi, as related in the monument which he set up at Napata, or to that by Esarhaddon, of which we gain our knowledge from the inscriptions of his son, Asshur-bani-pal. In the former case, we must suppose it written as early as B.C. 735; in the latter, its date might be as late as B.C. 690. The division of Egypt, "kingdom against kingdom," is a circumstance rather in favour of the earlier date; but the "cruel lord," and the mention of the "princes of Zoan and Noph," are decisive for the later. Piankhi is anything rather than a "cruel lord," being particularly mild and clement; Napata (Noph) is under him, and cannot be said to have been "deceived" or to have "seduced Egypt;" and Zoan plays no part in the history of the period. Esarhaddon, on the contrary, was decidedly a "cruel" prince, and treated Egypt with great severity, splitting it up into a number of governments. Zoan was one of the leading cities of the time, and Noph was the leading power on the Egyptian side, the head of the patriotic party which resisted the Assyrian monarch, but to no purpose. We may, therefore, regard this prophecy as one of Isaiah's latest, placed where it is merely on account of its heading—the compiler having placed all the "burdens" against foreign countries together.

Ver. 1.—**The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud.** Natural imagery to express the rapidity of Divine visitations (comp. Ps. civ. 3). God, being about to visit Egypt with a judgment of extreme severity, is represented as entering the land in person (so in ch. xiii. 5). **The idols of Egypt shall be moved.** Neither Piankhi nor any other Ethiopian conqueror made war on the Egyptian idols; but the Assyrians were always bent on humbling the gods of the hostile countries (see above, ch. x. 10; and comp. ch. xxxvi. 18—20). We have no detailed account of Esarhaddon's campaign; but we find Asshur-bani-pal's first victory over Tirhakah immediately followed by the presentation to him in his camp of Egyptian deities (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' p. 20, l. 1), *i.e.* of their images. These were probably taken to Nineveh, or else destroyed. At a later date, the same monarch deprived an Egyptian temple of two of its sacred obelisks (ibid., p. 54, ll. 4, 5). **The heart of Egypt shall melt** (comp. ch. xiii. 7; Ps. xxii. 14).

Ver. 2.—**I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians.** The disintegration of Egypt commenced about B.C. 760—750, towards the close of the twenty-second dynasty. About B.C. 735 a struggle began between Piankhi, King of Upper Egypt, and Tafnekht, King of Sais and Memphis, in which the other princes took different sides. Ten or twelve years later there was a struggle between Bocchoris and Sabaco. From this time onwards, until Psamatik I. re-established the unity of Egypt (about B.C. 650), the country was always more or less divided, and on the occurrence of any crisis the princes were apt to make war one upon another. **Kingdom against kingdom.** During the period of disintegration, the title of "king" was assumed by most of the petty princes, though they were little more than chiefs of cities (see 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. p. 100; G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' pp. 20—22).

Ver. 3.—**They shall seek to the idols.** The Egyptians believed that their gods gave them oracles. Menephthah claims to have been warned by Phthah, the god of Memphis, not to take the field in person against the Libyans when they invaded the Delta, but to leave the task of contending with them to his generals (Brugsch, 'History of Egypt,' vol. ii. p. 119). Herodotus speaks of there being several well-known oracular shrines in Egypt, the most trustworthy being that of Maut, at the city which he calls Buto (ii. 152; comp. ch. 111). **The charmers . . . them that have familiar spirits . . . wizards.** Classes of men corresponding to the "magicians" and "wise men" of earlier times (Gen. xli. 8). (On the large place which magic occupied in the thoughts of the Egyptians, see 'Pulpit Commentary' on Exod. vii. 11.) There was no diminution of the confidence reposed in them as time went on; and some remains of their practices seem to survive to the present day.

Ver. 4.—**The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord.** It has been

observed above that Piankhi will not answer to this description. It will, however, well suit Esarhaddon. Esarhaddon, soon after his accession, cut off the heads of Abdi-Milkut, King of Sidon, and of Sanduarri, King of Kundi, and hung them round the necks of two of their chief officers (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 137—139). In an expedition which he made into Arabia, he slew eight of the sovereigns, two of them being women ('Records of the Past,' vol. iii. pp. 106, 107). On conquering Egypt he treated it with extreme severity. Not only did he divide up the country into twenty governments, but he changed the names of the towns, and assigned to his twenty governors, as their main duty, that they were "to slay, plunder, and spoil" their subjects (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' p. 37, l. 7; comp. p. 16, l. 7). He certainly well deserved the appellations of "a cruel lord," "a fierce king."

Ver. 5.—**The waters shall fail from the sea.** By "the sea" it is generally allowed that the Nile must be meant, as in ch. xviii. 2 and Nah. iii. 8. The failure might be caused by deficient rains in Abyssinia and Equatorial Africa, producing an insufficient inundation. It might be aggravated by the neglect of dykes and canals, which would be the natural consequence of civil disorders (see Canon Cook's 'Inscription of Piankhi,' p. 14). **Wasted and dried up**; rather, *parched and dried up.* Allowance must be made for Oriental hyperbole. The meaning is only that there shall be a great deficiency in the water supply. Such a deficiency has often been the cause of terrible famines in Egypt.

Ver. 6.—**And they shall turn the rivers far away**; rather, *and the rivers shall stagnate* (Cheyne). Probably the canals are intended, as in Exod. vii. 19 (see 'Pulpit Commentary,' *ad loc.*). **The brooks of defence shall be emptied.** Some render this "brooks of Egypt," regarding *matsor* as here used for "Mitsraim;" but our translation is more forcible, and may well stand. The "brooks of defence" are those which had hitherto formed the moats round walled cities (comp. ch. xxxvii. 25; Nah. iii. 8). **The reeds and flags shall wither.** Reeds, flags, rushes, and water-plants of all kinds abound in the backwaters of the Nile, and the numerous ponds and marshes connected with its overflow (see the 'Pulpit Commentary' on Exod. ii. 3, p. 24). These forms of vegetation would be the first to wither on the occurrence of a deficient inundation.

Ver. 7.—**The paper reeds by the brooks, etc.**; rather, *the meadows on the river, along the banks of the river, and every seed-plot by the river.* The banks of the Nile were partly grass-land (Gen. xli. 2, 18), partly cultivated in grain or vegetables (Herod., ii. 14), an either case producing the most luxuriant crops. All, however, depended on the inundation, and, if that failed, or so far as it failed, the results predicted by the prophet would happen.

Ver. 8.—**The fishers also shall mourn.** The fisherman's trade was extensively practised in ancient Egypt, and anything which interfered with it would necessarily be regarded as a great calamity. A large class supported itself by the capture and sale of fish fresh or salted. The Nile produced great abundance of fish, both in its main stream and in its canals and backwaters. Lake Mœris also provided an extensive supply (Herod., ii. 149). **All they that cast angle into the brooks**; rather, *into the river.* Fishing with a hook was practised in Egypt, though not very widely, except as an amusement by the rich. Actual hooks have been found, not very different from modern ones (Rawlinson, 'History of Ancient Egypt,' vol. i. p. 506), and representations of angling occur in some of the tombs. Sometimes a line only is used, sometimes a rod and line (see Rawlinson, 'Herodotus,' vol. ii. pp. 101, 103, 2nd edit.). **They that spread nets.** Nets were very much more widely employed than lines and hooks. Ordinarily a drag-net was used; but sometimes small fry were taken in the shallows by means of a double-handled landing-net (ibid., p. 108, note 2).

Ver. 9.—**They that work in fine flax.** Linen of great fineness and delicacy was woven in Egypt, for the priests' dresses, for mummy-cloths, and for corselets. Solomon imported "linen yarn" from his Egyptian neighbours (1 Kings x. 28), and the Phœnicians a linen fabric for their sails (Ezek. xxvii. 7). In the general decline of Egyptian prosperity, caused by the circumstances of the time, the manufacturers of linen would suffer. **They that weave net-works**; rather, *they that weave white clothes.* Cotton fabrics are probably intended. **Shall be confounded**; literally, *shall blush*, or *be ashamed.*

Ver. 10.—**And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof**; rather, *and the foundations thereof shall be broken*, or *crushed to pieces* (Kay). The rich and noble, the foundations of the fabric of society, seem to be meant. **All that make sluices**, etc. Translate, *all that work for hire* (comp. Prov. xi. 18) *shall be grieved in soul.* The meaning is that all classes, from the highest to the lowest, shall suffer affliction (so Lowth, Gesenius, Knobel, Kay, Cheyne).

Ver. 11.—**Surely the princes of Zoan are fools.** Zoan, or Tanis, which had been an insignificant city since the time of the shepherd-kings, came to the front once more at the time of the struggle between Egypt and

Assyria. Esarhaddon made it the head of one of the petty kingdoms into which he divided Egypt (G. Smith, 'History of Asshurbani-pal,' p. 21, l. 2). Early in the reign of his son it revolted, in conjunction with Sais and Mendes, but was ere long reduced to subjection by the Assyrians. Its king, Petubastes, was taken to Nineveh, and there probably put to death. Its "princes" were, no doubt, among those who counselled resistance to Assyria. **The counsel of the wise**, etc.; literally, *as for the wise counsellors of Pharaoh, their counsel is become senseless*. Two classes of advisers seem to be intended—nobles, supposed to be qualified by birth; and "wise men," qualified by study and education. Both would now be found equally incapable. **Pharaoh.** Probably Tirhakah is intended. It is possible that he was really suzerain of Egypt at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, when Shabatok was nominally king. It is certain that, after the death of Shabatok (about B.C. 698), he was recognized as sovereign both of Ethiopia and of Egypt, and ruled over both countries. Esarhaddon found him still occupying this position in B.C. 673, when he made his Egyptian expedition. Tirhakah's capital at this time was Memphis. **How say ye**, etc.? With what face can you boast of your descent, or of your learning, when you are unable to give any sound advice?

Ver. 12.—**Where** are **they? where**, etc.? rather, *Where, then, are thy wise men?* If thou hast any, let them come forward and predict the coming course of events, what Jehovah has determined to do (compare similar challenges in the later chapters of the book, ch. xli. 21—23; xliii. 9; xlviii. 14, etc.).

Ver. 13.—**The princes of Noph.** There are no grounds for changing "Noph" into "Moph." "Noph" is probably "Napata," known as "Nap" in the hieroglyphic inscriptions—the original capital of the Ethiopian kings, and, when Memphis had become their capital, still probably regarded as the second city of the empire. The "princes of Noph" would be Tirhakah's counsellors. **They have also**, etc. Translate, *Even they have led Egypt astray, who are the corner-stone of her tribes.* Strictly speaking, there were no "tribes" in Egypt, much less "castes," but only classes, marked out by strong lines of demarcation the one from the other. Herodotus gives seven of them (ii. 164)—priests, soldiers, herdsmen, swineherds, tradesmen, interpreters, and boatmen. But there were several others also, *e.g.* agricultural labourers, fishermen, artisans, official *employés*, etc.

Ver. 14.—**The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit**, etc. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6). To bring Egypt into so distracted a state, the hand of God had been necessary. He had introduced into the nation "a spirit of perverseness." Those in whom this spirit was had then "led Egypt astray in all her doings." They had made her "like a drunken man," who "staggers" along his path, and slips in "his own vomit." Long-continued success and prosperity produces often a sort of intoxication in a nation.

Ver. 15.—**Neither shall there be**, etc. Translate, *And there shall be for Egypt no work in which both the head and the tail, both the palm branch and the rush, may (conjointly) work.* The general spirit of perverseness shall prevent all union of high with low, rich with poor.

Ver. 16.—**In that day**; or, *at that time*; i.e. when the Assyrian invasion comes. **Shall Egypt be like unto women** (comp. Jer. li. 30). So Xerxes said of his fighting men at Salamis: "My men have become women" (Herod., viii. 88). **Because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord** (comp. ch. xi. 15 and xxx. 32). The Egyptians would scarcely recognize Jehovah as the Author of their calamities, but it would none the less be his hand which punished them.

Ver. 17.—**The land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt.** In Manasseh's reign Judæa became subject to Assyria (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11; G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 139, l. 13), and had to take part in the hostile expeditions, which both Esarhaddon and his son, Asshurbanipal, conducted against Egypt. Egypt had to keep her eye on Judæa continually, to see when danger was approaching her. It is not likely that Isaiah's prophecies caused the "terror" here spoken of. **Every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid**; rather, *when any one maketh mention thereof, they shall turn to him in fear.* The very mention of Judæa by any one shall cause fear, because they will expect to hear that an expedition has started, or is about to start, from that country. **Because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts.** This is how Isaiah views the Assyrian attacks on Egypt, not how the Egyptians viewed them. The fear felt by the Egyptians was not a religious fear. They simply dreaded the Assyrian armies, and Judæa as the country from which the expeditions seemed to issue.

Vers. 18—22.—THE TURNING OF EGYPT TO JEHOVAH. The chastisement of the Egyptians shall be followed, after a while, by a great change. Influences from Canaan shall penetrate Egypt (ver. 18), an altar shall be raised in her midst to Jehovah (ver. 19), and she herself shall cry to him

for succour (ver. 20) and be delivered (ver. 20). Egypt shall even become a part of Jehovah's kingdom, shall "know him," and serve him with sacrifice and oblation (ver. 21), and perform her vows to Jehovah, and have her supplications heard by him, and be converted and healed (ver. 22).

Ver. 18.—**In that day.** Not really the day of vengeance, but that which, in the prophet's mind, is most closely connected with it—the day of restitution—whereof he has spoken perpetually (ch. i. 25–27; ii. 2—4; iv. 2—6; vi. 13, etc.). The two are parts of one scheme of things, and belong in the prophet's mind to one time. **Shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan.** It is quite true, as Mr. Cheyne remarks, that the Eastern Delta was from a very early date continually more and more Semitised by an influx of settlers from Palestine, and that Egyptian literature bears strong marks of this linguistic influence. But this is scarcely what the prophet intends to speak about. He is not interested in philology. What he means is that there will be an appreciable influx into Egypt of Palestinian ideas, thoughts, and sentiments. "Five" is probably used as a "round" number. The first manifest fulfilment of the prophecy was at the foundation of Alexandria, when the Jews were encouraged to become settlers by the concession of important privileges (Josephus, 'Contr. Ap.,' ii. 4), and where they ultimately became the predominant element in the population, amounting, according to Philo ('In Flacc.,' § 6), to nearly a million souls. The next great Palestinian influx was under Ptolemy VI. (Philometor), when Onias fled from Palestine with a number of his partisans, and obtained permission to erect a Jewish temple near Heliopolis. The site of this temple is probably marked by the ruins at Tel-el-Yahoudeh ('Quarterly Statement' of Palest. Expl. Fund for July, 1880, pp. 137—139). It seems to have been a centre to a number of Jewish communities in the neighbourhood. In this double way Jehovah became known to Egypt before Christianity. A Christian Church was early established in Alexandria, possibly by St. Mark. **Swear to the Lord of hosts;** *i.e.* "swear fidelity to him." **One shall be called, The city of destruction.** Some manuscripts read *'Ir-ha-Khêres*, "City of the Sun," for *'Ir-ha-hêres*, "City of Destruction," in which case the reference would be plainly to Heliopolis, which was in the immediate neighbourhood of Tel-el-Yahoudeh, and which in the Ptolemaic period may well have fallen under Jewish influence. Even if *'Ir-ha-hêres* stand as the true reading, the name may still have been given with allusion to Heliopolis, the prophet intending to say, "That city which was known as the City of the Sun-God shall become known as the City of Destruction of the Sun-God and of idolatrous worship generally." That Heliopolis did actually fall under Jewish influence in the Ptolemaic period appears from a remarkable passage of Polyhistor, who says of the Exodus and the passage of the Red Sea, "The Memphites say that Moses, being well acquainted with the district, watched the ebb of the tide, and so led the people across the dry bed of the sea; but *they of Heliopolis* affirm that the king, at the head of a vast force, and having the sacred animals also with him, pursued after the Jews, because they were carrying away with them the riches which they had borrowed from the Egyptians. Then," *they say*, "the voice of God commanded Moses to smite the sea with his rod, and divide it; and Moses, when he heard, touched the water with it, and so the sea parted asunder, and the host marched through on dry ground." Such an account of the Exodus would scarcely have been given by Egyptians unless they were three parts Hebraized.

Ver. 19.—**There shall be an altar to the Lord.** An altar to the Lord was undoubtedly erected by Onias in the temple which he obtained leave to build from Ptolemy Philometor. Josephus says that he persuaded Ptolemy by showing him this passage of Isaiah ('Ant. Jud.,' xiii. 3; 'Bell. Jud.,' vii. 10). **And a pillar at the border thereof.** It is not clear that any "pillar" was ever actually erected. The erection of pillars for religious purposes was forbidden by the Law (Deut. xvi. 22). But this would be a pillar of witness (Gen. xxxi. 52), and would mark that the land was Jehovah's. Dr. Kay suggests that "the Jewish synagogue first, and afterwards the Christian Church at Alexandria, standing like a lofty obelisk, with the name of Jehovah inscribed upon it, at the entrance of Egypt," sufficiently fulfilled the prophecy.

Ver. 20.—**It shall be for a sign.** The outward tokens of Jehovah-worship shall witness to God that he has in Egypt now a covenant people, and he will deal with them accordingly. **He shall send them a saviour, and a great one.** This does not seem to point to any earthly deliverer, but to the Saviour from the worst of all oppressors, sin and Satan, whom they will need equally with the rest of his people.

Ver. 21.—**The Lord shall be known;** rather, *shall make himself known*, as in Ezek. xx. 5, 9; by answering prayer, by spiritual influences, and the like. **The Egyptians shall know the Lord** (comp. Jer. xxxi. 34, "They shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest"). **And shall do sacrifice and oblation;** rather, *shall serve with sacrifice*

and oblation. The bulk of the Jews settled in Egypt, together with their Egyptian proselytes, went up year by year to worship Jehovah at Jerusalem, and make offerings to him there (see Zech. xiv. 16—19). Christian Egypt worshipped God with sacrifice and oblation in the same sense as the rest of the Church (Mal. i. 11).

Ver. 22.—**And Jehovah shall smite Egypt, smiting and healing**; *i.e.* Jehovah shall indeed "smite Egypt," as already prophesied (vers. 1—16), but it shall be with a merciful object, in order, after smiting, to "heal." His smiting shall induce them to "return" to him, and when they return he will forgive and save (comp. Zeph. iii. 8, 9; Jer. xii. 14—16). Egypt was a Christian country from the third century to the seventh; and the Coptic Church (though very corrupt) still remains, knowing Jehovah, and offering the holy oblation of the Christian altar continually.

Vers. 23—25.—UNION BETWEEN EGYPT, ASSYRIA, AND ISRAEL. Assyria's conversion to God will follow or accompany that of Egypt. The two will be joined with Israel in an intimate connection, Israel acting as the intermediary. There will be uninterrupted communication, common worship, and the common blessing of God extending over the three.

Ver. 23.—**Shall there be a highway.** The phraseology resembles that of ch. xi. 16; but the purpose is different. Then the "highway" was to facilitate the return of the Israelites to their own land. Now the object is perfectly free communication between the three peoples. **The Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.** "Shall serve" means "shall worship" (see ver. 21). The "Assyrians" represent the inhabitants of the Mesopotamian regions generally. As, from the time of Alexander, Hebrew influence extended itself largely over Egypt, so, even from an earlier date, it began to be felt in the Mesopotamian countries. The transplantation of the ten tribes, or a considerable portion of them, into Upper Mesopotamia and Media, was the commencement of a diffusion of Hebrew ideas through those regions. The captivity of Judah still further impressed these ideas on the native races. Great numbers of Jews did not return from the Captivity, but remained in the countries and cities to which they had been transported, particularly in Babylon (Josephus, 'Ant. Jud.,' xi. 1). The policy of the Seleucid princes was to establish Jewish colonies in all their great cities. In the time between Alexander and the birth of our Lord, the Hebrew community was recognized as composed of three great sections —the Palestinian, the Egyptian, and the Syro-Babylonian. Constant communication was maintained between the three branches. Ecclesiastical regulations, framed at Jerusalem, were transmitted to Alexandria and Babylon, while collections made in all parts of Egypt and Mesopotamia for the temple service were annually carried to the Palestinian capital by trusty persons. It is thus quite reasonable to regard as an "initial stage in the fulfilment of this prophecy" the state of things existing at this period (Kay). The more complete fulfilment was doubtless after Pentecost, when Christianity was preached and established in Egypt and Libya on the one hand, in Parthia, and Media, and Elam, and Mesopotamia on the other (Acts ii. 9, 10).

Ver. 24.—**In that day shall Israel be the third**; rather, *a third.* Not third in rank, for ver. 25 shows that she would retain a pre-eminence, but the common intermediary, bringing the other two together. **A blessing in the midst of the land**; rather, *in the midst of the earth.* Judæan monotheism, upheld by God's people in Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, would be a blessing, not only to those three countries, but to the world at large. So, and still more, would Christianity.

Ver. 25.—**Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless**; rather, *forasmuch as the Lord of hosts hath blessed him.* "Him" must be understood collectively, of the *threefold* Israel, spread through the *three* countries, which all partake of the blessing. The three countries are able to be a blessing to the world at large, because God's blessing rests upon them. **Egypt my people.** Egypt's great work in Jewish times, by which she became a blessing to the world, was her translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, commanded by Egyptian kings, and executed at Alexandria, the Egyptian capital. Neo-Platonism certainly owed much to this source. Stoicism probably something. **Assyria the work of my hands.** Assyria did no such work as Egypt. Neither the Targum of Onkelos nor the Babylonian Talmud can be compared for a moment with the Septuagint. Still the Mesopotamian Jews were a blessing to their neighbours. They kept alive in the East the notion of one true and spiritual God; they elevated the tone of men's thoughts; they were a perpetual protest against idolatry, with all its horrors. They, no doubt, prepared the way for that acceptance of Christianity by large masses of the population in Syria, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, and even in Persia, of which we have evidence in the ecclesiastical history of the first seven centuries. **Israel mine inheritance** (comp. ch. xlvii. 6; lxiii. 17).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—17.—*Egypt's punishment, a proof both of God's long-suffering and of his inexorable justice.* The punishment of Egypt by the Assyrian conquest, on which the prophet enlarges in this chapter, may be regarded in a double light.

I. AS STRONGLY EXHIBITING THE LONG-SUFFERING AND MERCY OF GOD. 1. Consider the long persistence of Egypt in sins of various kinds—idolatry, king-worship, practice of magic, kidnapping of slaves, cruel usage of captives, impurity, indecency; consider that her monarchy had lasted at least sixteen hundred years, and that both in religion and in morals she had continually grown worse. 2. Bear in mind her treatment of God's people—how she had first oppressed them (Exod. i. 8—14), then endeavoured to exterminate them (Exod. i. 15—22); this failing, made their bondage harder (Exod. v. 6—19); repeatedly refused to let them go; sought to destroy them at the Red Sea (Exod. xv. 9); plundered them in the time of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv. 25, 26); alternately encouraged and deserted them in their struggles against Assyria (1 Kings xvii. 4; xviii. 21, 24). 3. Note also that she had helped to corrupt God's people. In Egypt many Israelites had worshipped the Egyptian gods (Josh. xxiv. 14; Ezek. xx. 8) They had brought from Egypt an addiction to magical practices which had never left them. Manasseh, in calling his eldest son "Amon," intended to acknowledge the Egyptian god of that name. Under these circumstances, it is marvellous that Egypt had been allowed to exist so long, and, on the whole, to flourish; and the marvel can only be accounted for by the extreme long-suffering and extraordinary mercy of Almighty God.

II. AS A DECISIVE PROOF OF GOD'S INEXORABLE JUSTICE. However long God defers the punishment of sin, it comes at last with absolute certainty. It might have seemed as if the hardships suffered by his people in Egypt had escaped God's recollection, so many years was it since they had happened. It might have seemed as if all Egypt's old sins were condoned—as if she was to escape unpunished. Sixteen centuries of empire! Why, Rome herself, the "iron kingdom," that "broke in pieces and bruised" all things (Dan. ii. 4), was not allowed more than twelve centuries of existence. But Egypt was allowed a far longer term, not only of existence, but of prosperity. Since the time of the shepherd-kings, four hundred years before the Exodus, she had suffered no great calamity. Even the Ethiopians had not been so much foreign conquerors, as princes connected by blood and identical in religion, who claimed the crown by right of descent from former Egyptian sovereigns. But God had all the time been waiting, with his eye upon the sinful nation, counting her offences, remembering them against her, and bent on taking vengeance. And the vengeance, when it came, was severe. First, internal discord and civil war—"kingdom against kingdom, and city against city" (ver. 2); then conquest by an alien nation—conquest effected by at least three distinct expeditions, in which the whole land was overrun, the cities taken and plundered, and army after army slaughtered; finally, subjection to a "fierce king," a "cruel lord" (ver. 4). And the sufferings of war aggravated, apparently, by the natural calamity of a great drought—a failure of the inundation either for one year, or possibly for several (vers. 5—8). Truly, when the day of vengeance came, Egypt was afflicted indeed! No wonder she "was afraid, and feared because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts" (ver. 16). It is, indeed, "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31).

Ver. 22.—*Smiting and healing closely connected in God's counsels.* God's smiting is no doubt twofold, (1) remedial and (2) penal; but by far the greater portion of it is of the former kind. Once only has he visited mankind at large penally—*i.e.* at the Deluge; but a thousand times has he visited them remedially. Similarly with nations. He smote Egypt in Moses' time with the ten plagues, not to destroy, but to chasten. So again at the Red Sea. So now by the hands of Esarhaddon and his son. So by Nebuchadnezzar, Cambyses, Ochus. And at last he bowed their hearts and caused them to turn to him, first partially, when Judaism gained an influence over them; afterwards, as a nation, when they accepted Christianity. Former chastisements had doubtless some remedial force, or the nation would scarcely have been borne with so

long; but they did not fully heal, and blow after blow became requisite. So God went on "smiting and healing." And the course of his providence is similar with individuals. Primarily he smites to heal. Each offence brings down his rod, but the stroke is comparatively light at first, and intended to warn, admonish, call to amendment. If men persist in wrong courses, the blows become heavier. But still the intention is the same; it is sought to bring them to repentance. God has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. Only after repeated trials, after blow upon blow, warning upon warning, if they will not repent, if they will not be healed, the penal sentence goes forth to "pluck up and destroy" (Jer. xii. 17).

Vers. 23, 24.—*Unity in religion joins together the bitterest foes.* As, ultimately, the establishment of the kingdom of Christ among all the nations of the earth (ch. ii. 2) will produce a reign of universal peace, so that men will everywhere "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks" (ch. ii. 4), so, on a lesser scale, wherever true religion prevails, asperities are softened, old enmities die out and disappear, a friendly spirit springs up, and former adversaries are reconciled and become friends. Assyria, Egypt, Israel, long the bitterest foes, were drawn together by a common faith in the later days of Judaism and the earlier ones of Christianity—felt sympathy one with another, and lived in harmony. The Papacy was an attempt to bring all the Roman communion into a species of political unity, to abolish wars between its various members, and unite it against heathendom. This attempt had, however, only a partial success, owing to the admixture of bad with good motives in those who were at the head of the movement and had the direction of it. That war has not yet ceased among all Christian nations is a slur upon Christianity, and an indication that nations are still Christian in name rather than in spirit. The league of Assyria, Egypt, Israel, may well be held up to the modern Christian world as an example that should shame it into the adoption of "peace principles." If such foes, so fiercely hostile, so long estranged, could become close friends through the influence of a community of religion, why cannot the Christian nations of modern times attain to a similar unity?

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Coming judgment upon Egypt.* The historical allusions in this passage cannot be positively cleared up. So far as the discovery of inscriptions in recent years enables us to lift a little the veil which hangs over the land, we see it shaken to the centre by the wars of rival chieftains. A victory of Sargon over the Egyptian king Shabatok, in B.C. 720, has been made out from Assyrian inscriptions; and, again, the conquest of Egypt by Esarhaddon in B.C. 672, who divided the land into twenty small tributary kingdoms. The chapter may refer to this event, and it may not (see Cheyne's Introduction to the chapter).

I. THE ADVENT OF JEHOVAH. "He rideth upon a swift cloud" (comp. Ps. xviii. 10, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly;" comp. Ps. civ. 3). To study those magnificent winged figures, which pass generally under the name of griffins, in our museums and works of art, and as they are described by Ezekiel in the land of captivity (i.), may be the best way to realize the significance of this poetry. We must throw ourselves into that mood of mind in which all life and movement in nature is symbolic of the infinite power and majesty of the Divine Being—audibly the wind, visibly the strong gathering cloud upon the horizon. This picture, then, is a hint (1) of the majesty of Jehovah; (2) of his ascendency in the world of spirit. The "not gods" of Egypt shall shake before him. He comes to judge them. The God of Israel is on his way to punish the teeming multitudes of Memphis, Pharaoh, and Egypt, and their gods and kings. The idols are to be destroyed, their images are to cease; and the secular power, which has been supported by a false religion, shall be laid low (comp. Exod. xii. 12; Jer. xlvi. 25; Ezek. xxx. 13). A striking contrast is suggested between the pure sublime religion of Jehovah and the debased worship of the Egyptians, whose reverence for cats, and bulls, and crocodiles, and onions attracted the satire of later times. How could such worshippers do other than tremble, their heart melting

within them at the approach of the light that reveals and judges the voluntary darknesses and confusions of the mind? As Calvin remarks, we should behold the same thing exemplified in all revolutions of kingdoms, which proceed solely from the hand of God. If the heart melts and the strength fails in men who are usually brave, and who had formerly displayed great courage, this ought to be ascribed to the judgment of God.

II. THE JUDGMENTS DESCRIBED. 1. *Internal dissension.* One canton is set against another. There will be the feud of brother with brother, fellow with fellow, city with city, and kingdom with kingdom. Men's hearts are in the hand of God. Whenever we see in a nation social dissension setting in, unity and co-operation no longer possible, it is a sign that a new force is at work, that a new light has come in, that existing customs are being criticized, in short, that "God has awoke to judgment." Such times are times for self-scrutiny, for thoughtful study, for earnest prayer. 2. *The sense of the hollowness of existing institutions.* Terrible is it when a nation suddenly awakens to find its strongest ideals reduced to empty and mocking delusions; terrible also for the individual. The "heart made empty." Sometimes it is a "science falsely so called;" sometimes a spurious faith, which is suddenly found to be a leaking cistern, and the water of life has fled. Under these conditions there will be a feverish outbreak of old superstition. Men will resort to the "not gods" and to the "spiritualists"—the "mutterers," who pretend to give voices and messages from the other world. So men have done in our time. The history of the heart repeats itself from age to age. If men have not genuine religion, they must have the counterfeit of it; and they will love the lie and cling to the cheat when the possibility of the truth is no longer within reach. 3. *Subjection to the tyrant.* The land will be shut up into the hand of a hard lord, and a fierce king shall rule over them. And is not tyranny the last sign of Divine displeasure, as viewed from another side it is the last sign of degeneracy and weakness in a nation's manhood? "Hence we see how great is the folly of men who are desirous to have a powerful and wealthy king reigning over them, and how justly they are punished for their ambition, though it cannot be corrected by the experience of every day, which is everywhere to be seen in the world" (Calvin).—J.

Vers. 5—10.—*The drying up of the Nile.* Nothing has left a deeper mark on the traditions of Eastern lands than the impressions of burning heat, the drying up of springs, the consequent suffering. Egypt was the "gift of the Nile," Herodotus said. Well might the presence or absence of its waters denote the pleasure or the wrath of Deity.

I. THE DESCRIPTION. The Pelusiac arm of the Nile is dried. The neglected canals, dykes, and reservoirs become stagnant, the vegetation withers. The bright oasis of the Nile will melt away into the surrounding desert. The canals, first undertaken as a necessary work of civilization and culture, become naturally neglected and choked up in time of civil war.

II. THE EFFECTS ON PEACEFUL INDUSTRY. Besides agriculture there were three main sources of Egyptian wealth: the fishing, the linen manufacture, and the cotton manufacture. There was abundance of fish in the Nile, and it was a great article of food. The combed flax was prepared for the priests' clothing and for the mummy-cloths, and the cotton for dress in general. The result is universal consternation in all ranks and classes. The wealthy classes, the "pillars" of the land, and the artisan population are alike in despair.

III. THE COINCIDENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL AND THE NATURAL WORLD. A fertile land, an industrious people, peace and plenty, the favour of God,—these are ideas that lie linked together in the thought of the prophet, forming one causal chain. The displeasure of Jehovah, the effect in war, and this, again, working desolation in the face of nature and cutting at the root of industry,—these form another chain of connected representations. From the sources and springs of the mighty Nile up to the seat of thought, passion, and motion in the mightier human heart, all are in the hands of Jehovah. Alike in every occupation of the industrial and of the political and intellectual world, let us own our dependence upon him.—J.

Vers. 11—15.—*The folly of statesmen.* God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world, in Egypt as in other lands. And the marks and characters of folly are everywhere the same.

I. THE SPIRIT OF BOASTING. The king and his priestly counsellors possess sacred books, which they consult as a college in times of emergency. The priests boast of being "sons of the wise," and sons of ancient kings. The Pharaoh himself belonged to the royal stock. Boasting is ever a sign of weakness. The strong man needs not to talk of his strength; he feels it, and others feel it. Wisdom is distinguished by the absence of self-conceit, and is impressive by its silence and modesty.

II. PROOFS OF FOLLY. 1. *Inability to read the signs of the times.* Prediction was their favourite occupation; how is it they cannot read the thoughts of Jehovah toward the land? They resort to false methods—astrology, divination, etc. Truth may not really be loved, or it may be sought by paths that can only lead away from it. It is not by mere reading, it is not by digging in quaint and curious lore, that we can arrive at sympathy with the mind of God. All the learning of the schools is folly unless we keep the light within brightly burning, the conscience clear, the mind, if not the knees, ever bent in the attitude of uplooking and prayer. 2. *Bad administration.* They lead the country astray. The priestly class, that is, the intellectual and educated class, looked upon as the "corner-stone of the tribes," are themselves under an illusion, and their "light and leading" is an *ignis-fatuus*. We are too much dazzled by the acuteness, the knowledge, the abilities, the vast grasp of facts, in our great men. Often the cleverness of such overreaches itself, and great men stumble and fall, and "run into great dangers which any peasant or artisan would have foreseen." They become inebriated by their own thoughts. But it ever sobers the mind to collect itself, so to speak, in God. "This wit, this insight, is *mine*, peculiarly mine"—he who speaks with himself thus—is on the brink of some fatal delusion. "It is God's peculiar gift to me; it is a talent *from* him, to be used *for* his world"—this is the thought that steadies; and "if our wisdom rest on God, he will truly be a steadfast Corner-stone, which no one shall shake or overthrow."

III. JUDICIAL INFATUATIONS. These delusions are traced to the judicial act of Jehovah. It is he who has put a cup of enchantment to their lips, so that the power of discernment is suspended. The image of drunkenness fitly represents their state. It is a spirit of "perverseness," or of "subversion." And the people have imbibed the same, so that they stagger about helplessly; there is no consistency, no agreement, no firm and joint action. It is an awful thing—the being "given over to a reprobate mind." Nor dare we accuse the Almighty of injustice. We are ready enough to throw the blame of our own aberrations upon others, upon circumstances, or even upon him. But what "right" have we to anything, from the light of the sun to the light of reason in the soul? God gives and God deprives, for reasons inscrutable to us and not to be questioned. But "the heart has reasons that reason knows not of;" and the heart knows that, if its choice be true, its asking will not be refused, the needed guidance will not be denied.—J.

Vers. 16—25.—*Mingled judgment and mercy.* I. THE EFFECT OF JUDGMENT. The land will be like timid and trembling women, for the mighty hand of Jehovah will be brandished aloft in judgment. Whenever it is felt that Divine power is working on the side of the foe, the most warlike nations lose heart. "God with us!"—a watchword that nerves the feeblest arm, and fills the faintest heart with courage. "God against us!"—the hand of the bravest hangs down, the knees of the stoutest tremble. Judah, Jehovah's seat of empire, will be a terror to the proud land of Egypt. The seeming weakest community, the most insignificant individual, will be a power if the truth is operating through it. It is not magnitude that is appalling; it is spiritual force. Men will shudder at the Name of Judah; it will be a symbol of a purpose never successfully resisted. But when thus the prospect is at its darkest for Egypt, a light of hope glimmers.

II. PROMISES OF GOOD. 1. *A view of Egypt's conversion* to the true religion here opens. There will be five cities speaking the tongue of Canaan, or Hebrew, the language of the worship of Jehovah. They will take the oath of loyalty to him. And it seems that the city known as "city of the sun" shall be called "city of the breaking down of idolatrous altars." And an altar of the true religion, with the pillar marking the holy place, will be seen, visibly witnessing to the Lord of hosts in the land. There is now a covenant between Jehovah and the repentant and restored land. He will no

longer be their Foe, but their Friend; and when they cry to him, in the midst of distress and oppression, he will hearken, and send a Helper and Deliverer. The people will sacrifice to him, and he will make himself known; whether in the land or at Jerusalem (comp. Zech. xiv. 16—19) is not stated. 2. *This cannot be without previous suffering.* Never does conversion from evil, from obstinate persistence in it, occur without suffering. But the suffering is beneficent, inflicted by love. God smites to heal. It is a thought echoed back from many a page: "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal;" "He has torn, and he will heal us; hath smitten, and will bind us up;" "He wounds, and his hands make whole" (Deut. xxxii. 39; Hos. vi. 1; Job v. 18). The fire of his wrath consumes, but purifies. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the Name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent" (Zeph. iii. 8, 9). There lives a fund of pity in the heart and constitution of nature—compassion in Jehovah, the Hebrew prophet said (Jer. xii. 14, 15). "God does not punish that he may punish, but that he may humble; wherefore, when humility is produced, his punishments proceed no further. God is of too great mercy to triumph over a prostrate soul" (South).

III. THE HAPPY RESULT. Peace replacing war, trust substituted for mutual hate. There is to be intercourse between Egypt and Assyria, a free highway between the two lands. Nay, there shall be a triple alliance, Israel being the third, and blessing is thus to be diffused over all the earth. Where Jehovah's blessing is, there is and must be prosperity. Thus have the clouds dispersed, and the golden year seems to have begun, "peace lying like a lane of beams across the sea, like a shaft of light athwart the land."

PERSONAL APPLICATION. To avoid national judgment, to secure the Divine favour, let each inquire into his own sins. Personal sins bring down national judgments. If there were no personal, there could be no national sin. In punishing the many, God does not overlook the individual. There is no suffering of a nation without the suffering of its members, no repentance which is not that of men one by one, no prosperity and favour which is not reflected from a million faces and hearts. There is infinite ground of hope from the promises of God, and from their actual fulfilment.—J.

Ver. 1.—*God's presence a trouble.* "Behold the Lord . . . shall come into Egypt . . . and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." The presence of God would produce consternation among the people. This is significant enough. It need excite no wonder, indeed, that the coming of the holy and righteous One into the midst of those who had provoked him by their idolatries would result in quaking of spirit, in liveliest agitation. What could await such guilty ones but the most serious rebuke, the most distressing judgments? But the presence of God is not only troublous to idolatrous Egyptians, but to his own servants. So the prophet himself found (ch. vi. 5). The psalmist "remembered God, and was troubled" (Ps. lxxvii. 3). Why is this? Concerning the trouble which the presence of God brings to the human spirit, we remark—

I. THAT HIS KNOWN NEARNESS TO US AND POWER OVER US MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO PRECLUDE SUCH ALARM. Why should we be concerned to find God appearing unto us? Do we not know well that he is "not far from any one of us;" that "in him we live and move and have our being"? Do we not know that he is judging our actions and our attitude toward himself every moment, and is, moreover, expressing his judgment by Divine bestowals and inflictions day by day? Why should terror or alarm, or even apprehension, seize us because he manifests himself to us, and constrains us to feel conscious that we are standing in his near presence? But, however we may reason thus, it is the fact—

II. THAT OBSERVATION AND EXPERIENCE UNITE TO PROVE THAT HIS FELT PRESENCE DOES TROUBLE US. Both Old Testament and New Testament history show that *any* visitant from the unseen world causes "the heart to melt;" and if any mere messenger (angel), how much more he who reigns over all that realm—the Divine and eternal Spirit himself? And we find now that when men, in the full possession of their spiritual faculties, have believed themselves to be in, or to be about to pass into, the near presence of the Eternal, their spirit has shrunk and trembled at the thought. We ask—

III. THE EXPLANATION OF THE FACT. The explanation is found in two things. 1. *In our sense of God's greatness*, and the corresponding consciousness of our own littleness. Those who move in a humble social sphere are agitated when they find themselves in the near presence of human rank, especially of high rank, more especially of royalty; how much more so when men feel themselves to be (or to be about to be) before the King of kings, the infinite God! 2. *In our sense of God's holiness* and the corresponding consciousness of our own imperfection and sin. (1) The Christian man may have his reason for apprehension; for has he not to bring his life of Christian service to the judgment of his Divine Master, for his approval or his disapproval; and is he not conscious that this his service has come short of his Lord's desire, if it has not been blemished or even stained by many sins? (2) The impenitent man has abundant reason for anxiety and even for alarm; for he is the child of privilege and opportunity; he has known his Lord's will; he has heard many times the sacred summons; he has often felt the movings of the Divine Spirit in his heart. But he has "judged himself unworthy of eternal life;" he has striven to silence the voices which came to him from heaven. He is open to the most terrible and intolerable rebuke of God (Prov. i. 24, etc.); he lies exposed to the penalty of deliberate disobedience, of persistent rejection of the grace of God (Luke xii. 47; John iii. 18, 19, 36; Heb. x. 26—31; xii. 25).—C.

Vers. 2—10.—*A picture of penalty.* The threatened penalty of Egypt as painted by the prophet here will, on examination, be found to be essentially the penalty with which God causes sin to be visited always and everywhere.

I. STRIFE, especially internal strife (ver. 2). The guilty *nation* will find itself plunged into civil war (Egypt, Greece, Rome, France, America—northern and southern states, etc.), or rent with bitter and vindictive factions; the guilty *family* will have its domestic harmony destroyed by petty broils and miserable disagreements; the *individual soul* will be compelled to expend its powers in internal strife—conscience having a long and perhaps desperate struggle with passion; reason, which urges to immediate decision, contending with the evil spirit of procrastination; the will to submit to Divine demands doing stern, protracted battle with a desire to conform to the good pleasure of the unholy and the unwise.

II. DELUSION. (Ver. 3.) As the Egyptians, paying the penalty of disobedience, were to abandon the counsels of human wisdom for the fancies and fooleries of the juggler, so will men find that sin leads down from the guidance of reason to the dictates of folly and the misleadings of delusion. It is not long before the sinner experiences "the deceitfulness of sin;" before he finds that he does not impose on other men half so much as he is imposed upon, or as he imposes on himself. He comes to think that utterances which are earthly, or of lower origin than that, are the voices of heaven; he "calls evil good, and good evil;" counsel which he ought to abjure as diabolical, he deems excellent and wise; neglecting truths and principles which would be his salvation, he falls back upon sentiments which lead down, with certain path, to innermost and uttermost ruin.

III. BONDAGE. (Ver. 4.) It is one of the most certain and one of the saddest penalties of sin that the wrong-doer is handed over to the despotism of "a cruel lord." By what truer or more descriptive terms could these enemies of the soul be characterized into whose iron grasp the transgressor falls? Is not the insatiable craving for strong drink or for the hurtful narcotic a "cruel lord"? What but cruel lords are covetousness, ambition, lasciviousness, the voracity or extreme delicacy of those "whose God is their belly"—the passion which demands and will not be denied, which consumes the time, which saps the energy, which steals the manhood that should be devoted to nobler ends, that should be laid on a worthier altar? The victims of vice are "holden with the cords of their sins;" they are "in the hand of a cruel lord," who will make them pay "the uttermost farthing."

IV. SHRINKAGE. (Vers. 5—10.) Egypt should be pitiably reduced; the waters of its life-giving river should be wanting (ver. 5), its vegetation should fade and die (ver. 6), its industries should be stopped (vers. 8, 9), its chief men should be overthrown (ver. 10). All Egyptian life, through its length and breadth, should be struck a ruinous blow, should shrink from fulness and power into feebleness and decline. Under the dominion of sin, human life suffers a ruinous reduction. Made for God, for

his likeness, for his fellowship, for his service, for the highest forms of usefulness and the noblest order of enjoyment, we sink into folly, into selfishness, into smallness of aim and littleness of accomplishment; our lives are narrowed, lessened, shrivelled. It is the pitiful penalty of departure from God, of withholding our hearts from our Divine Friend. In Christ we realize the fair and blessed opposites of these. In him is (1) *peace* (John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Eph. ii. 14); (2) *enlightenment* (1 Cor. xiv. 20; Eph. i. 18; Col. i. 9); *freedom* (John viii. 32—36; Rom. vi. 18; Gal. v. 1); *enlargement* (Matt. v. 45; John xv. 14; Rom. viii. 17; Eph. ii. 6; Rev. i. 6).—C.

Vers. 11—14.—*Leaders that mislead.* The strong, energetic language of the prophet respecting the princes and counsellors of Egypt express for us the vast injury which is wrought by untrustworthy teachers in every place and time, and the duty of the people to be on their guard against such seducers (ver. 13).

I. THE LEADERS THAT MISLEAD. (Vers. 10—13.) These are: 1. *In the nation*, leading their fellow-countrymen into a false and spurious patriotism; into vain-gloriousness; into luxury and extravagance; into the ruinous error that the fascinations of military glory are preferable to the advantages of peaceful industry, etc. 2. *In the Church*, leading their fellow-members into theological error; into doctrine which is not a faith but only a philosophy, or which is not a faith so much as a superstition; into indulgence in emotion without the cultivation of Christian morality; or into habits of virtue that do not rest on the basis of personal attachment to God, etc. 3. *In the family*, leading their children into laxity of belief; into the conviction that worldly success is of greater account than the favour of God and the possession of spiritual integrity; into the practice of dubious habits which tend to immorality or irreligion, etc.

II. THEIR LAMENTABLE RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE. (Ver. 12.) The "wise men" of Egypt could not tell "what the Lord of hosts had purposed;" they did not know his mind. What availed all their other knowledge, all their political sagacity, all their pretentious skill, if they were utterly ignorant of what was in the mind of God? Our leaders of to-day, in whatever sphere they may preside, are useless and worse than useless if they cannot propose those measures, if they cannot commend those doctrines, if they cannot foster those habits and instil those principles, which are according to the mind of God, which contain the will of Jesus Christ. To advise the policy, to repeat the phrases, to build up the character which they themselves received of their fathers, may be wholly inadequate, utterly inapplicable, entirely wrong; what is wanted in our leaders is the power to perceive the mind of God, to especially understand what is "his will concerning us in Christ Jesus," to guide and teach and train so that their disciples shall live in the light of his truth and the enjoyment of his friendship.

III. THE MISCHIEF WHICH THEY WORK. (Vers. 13, 14.) These men seduced Egypt from the true path, and they led her to err and stagger in false paths. The immensity of the evil which is wrought by false leaders, whether in the nation, the Church, or the home, is seen by regarding it on the negative and on the positive side. 1. *They seduce from the saving truth.* (1 John ii. 26.) They lead men from the fear of the living God; from the faith and love of Jesus Christ; from the produce of the heavenlier graces, and therefore from living the nobler and worthier life; from the possession of a peace which no distractions can disturb, and of a treasure which no thief can steal, and of a hope which triumphs over death. 2. *They lead into the saddest and even the grossest evils.* Their disciples "err . . . as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit." A painful but graphic picture of those who are led astray into evil paths, into beliefs which are not only false but shocking, into companionships and alliances which are not only unsatisfactory but demoralizing, into habits which are not only wrong but shameful. It is the duty of the community, in view of the fact that false and foolish leaders have always abounded, and that their influence is disastrous, (1) to be sedulously on guard lest these should be appointed; (2) to depose those that are found unworthy of their charge; (3) to realize that every individual man is responsible to God for the faith he holds and the life he lives (Luke xii. 57; Gal. vi. 4, 5).—C.

Vers. 18—22.—*Smiting and healing.* We may glean from these verses—

I. THAT THE BLOWS WHICH WE SUFFER IN OUR ORDINARY EXPERIENCE COME FROM THE HAND OF GOD. No doubt the various calamities by which Egypt was afflicted

came to her in the ordinary ways, and appeared to her citizens as the result of common causes. They accounted for them by reference to general laws, to visible human powers, to known processes and current events. Yet we know them to have been distinctly and decidedly of God, by whatever instrumentalities they may have been brought about. "*The Lord* shall smite Egypt" (ver. 22). So now with us; the evils which overtake us—sickness, separation, disappointment, losses, bereavement, etc. —may occur as the result of causes which we can discover and name; nevertheless they may be regarded as visitations, as chastisement, as discipline, from the hand of God.

II. THAT THESE WOUNDS OF GOD'S CAUSING ARE INTENDED BY HIM TO ABOUND UNTO THE HEALTH OF THE WOUNDED SPIRIT. "He shall smite *and heal.*" God's main purpose in smiting was to bring about a far healthier condition than existed before. *Afterwards* the chastening would "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness;" and for this end chiefly, if not wholly, it was sent. We are to consider that this is always God's design in sending affliction to his children. He smites that he may heal, and that the new health may be much better than the old—that the blessing gained may greatly outweigh the loss endured (2 Cor. iv. 17). To part with bodily health and to obtain spiritual soundness, to lose material possessions and secure treasures which make "rich toward God,"—this is to be enlarged indeed.

III. THAT THE RESTORATION OF THE SMITTEN SPIRIT IS ATTENDED AND FOLLOWED BY VARIOUS BLESSINGS. 1. The soul addressing itself to God in earnest prayer. "They shall cry unto the Lord" (ver. 20); "He shall be entreated of them" (ver. 22). This is an act of returning from folly and forgetfulness unto the God who has been forsaken: "They shall return," etc. (ver. 22; see also ver. 21). 2. The soul seeking God's acceptance in his appointed way. "There shall be an altar to the Lord" (ver. 19). However interpreted, this passage points to the special means appointed by God through Moses for obtaining forgiveness of sin, and suggests to us the one way—repentance and faith—by which we must seek and may find the Divine mercy. 3. Profession of attachment to God. These five cities should "swear to the Lord of hosts" (ver. 18). The pillar at the border would perhaps be an obelisk, making mention of his Name as the One that was worthy of human adoration. 4. The service of the lip. They would "speak the language of Canaan"—the language spoken by the people of God. Language is far from being everything, but it is far from being nothing (Ps. xix. 4; Matt. xii. 37; Rom. x. 10). By truthful, kindly, helpful speech, and in sacred song, we may do much in serving and in pleasing God. 5. Consecration. "They shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and shall perform it;" the solemn presentation of self unto a Divine Saviour and a lifelong redemption of the vow.—C.

VERS. 23, 24.—*The crown of privilege.* The promise of the text may not have seemed to Israel so gracious and so inspiring as many others; but it was one that might well have been considered surpassingly good. For it predicted that the time would come when Israel should be closely associated as "a third" with two great world-powers—Egypt and Assyria; not, indeed, to triumph over them, but to be "a blessing in the midst" of them. This is the very crown of privilege. Concerning privilege itself we may consider—

I. ITS UNDOUBTED EXISTENCE. There are "elect" nations and individuals; it is not only a truth written in the pages of Scripture, but a fact confirmed by all testimony and observation, that God has conferred on some much more than he has allotted to others. To one nation (man) he gives one talent, to another two, and to another five. Physical strength, intellectual capacity, force of character, material wealth and natural advantages, knowledge, revealed truth,—these are some of the privileges by which men and nations are favoured.

II. ITS PERIL. The great danger attending the possession of privilege is that of entirely mistaking the object of the Creator in conferring it; of assuming that he bestowed it simply for the gratification or the exaltation of its recipients. This was the disastrous mistake which the Jews made: hence their spiritual arrogance, their selfishness, their pitiable exclusiveness, their misreading of Scripture, their maltreatment of their Messiah. It is a mistake we are all tempted to make; it is one against which we do well to guard with the utmost vigilance; for it is a sinful one, and one that carries ruin in its train.

III. ITS CROWN. This is to be "a blessing in the midst of the land;" to be a bond of union between other powers—a "third" to the Egypt and Assyria by which we may be surrounded. *Privileged lands*, like England, find their crown, not in military successes, nor in annexations, nor even in well-filled banks or well-fitted vessels; but in giving free institutions to neighbouring or even distant nations, in conveying the message of Divine mercy to heathen lands, "in being a blessing in the midst of the *earth*." *Privileged men* find the crown of their life, not in possession, nor in enjoyment, nor in conscious superiority to others "that are without;" but in distributing, in imparting, in making others partakers of the peace and joy and hope that fill their own hearts, in broadening the belt of light on which they stand, in sowing the seed of the kingdom in land which now bears only briers and thorns, in being "a blessing in the midst of the *land*."—C.

Ver. 25.—*Lights in which God regards us.* The words intimate that there are various aspects in which the Divine Father looks at his human children, and they may suggest reciprocal views on our part.

I. LIGHTS IN WHICH GOD REGARDS US. 1. *As those to whom he is nearly related.* Egypt in her hour of obedience has become "my people," *i.e.* closely connected with God, and having, therefore, serious claims upon him. God does regard his own as those who are most closely, most intimately, most tenderly related to him, standing in such close relation that they may confidently reckon on the continuance of his kindness, on the protection and interposition of his strong arm. 2. *As those who are the product of his Divine energy.* "Assyria the work of my hands." We who are trusting and rejoicing in him and walking in his truth are frequently to remind ourselves that we are not the product of our own wisdom and effort, but are "his workmanship created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 10; and see 1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. v. 5). God has expended on us Divine thought, Divine love, Divine sorrow, Divine patience, Divine discipline. 3. *As those in whom he finds a Divine delight.* "Israel mine inheritance." In Israel, when that people was faithful to his rule, God found his portion, his inheritance. In us, when we are attentive to his voice, responsive to his love, obedient to his commands, submissive to his will, he finds a Divine satisfaction (John xv. 11). 4. *As those on whom he can confer blessedness.* "Whom the Lord shall bless;" "Whom God blesses, they are blessed indeed." Theirs is not mere physical excitement, or temporary gratification, or dubious delight, but true, abiding, elevating joy.

II. RECIPROCAL VIEWS WE SHOULD TAKE OF HIM. We should consider God: 1. As One to whom we are most intimately related—more closely, indeed, than to any human kindred. 2. As One to whom we owe everything we are, as well as everything we have. 3. As that One in whom, in whose friendship, service, presence, we find (and hope to find) our true and lasting heritage.—C.

Ver. 2.—*Political commotion regarded as Divine judgment.* "And I will spur Egypt against Egypt, and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his fellow, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." Civil war does far more serious and permanent mischief to a nation than foreign war. There are no such distressing conditions brought about by any other agencies as those which follow civil war. There can be no true heroism in its scenes; because the impulse is either mercenary, or it is class hatred and passion. Patriotism is swallowed up in mere sectional interests. The historical connections of this prophecy seem to be made clear by the recent discoveries of Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions. There has been found an inscription containing a proclamation of one Piankhi, who, in the eighth century B.C., united under his sceptre the whole of Egypt and Ethiopia. Lower Egypt was divided among rival princes, whose connection with their over-lord was merely nominal, and civil wars from time to time arose. That which is true of actual civil war, is in measure true of times of political excitement and conflict, when party feeling runs high. Some of the evils of such times may be pointed out.

I. THESE TIMES OF COMMOTION SET CLASS AGAINST CLASS. It is curious to notice that political conflict is never confined to the subject about which it arose. It is opening the flood-gates and letting out all the waters of class jealousy.

II. THESE TIMES DISTURB SOCIAL ORDER. Breaking up families and friendships, and diverting men's minds and energies from their ordinary occupations.

III. THESE TIMES INTERFERE WITH BUSINESS. Which is very sensitive to disturbed conditions of the body politic. Mutual trust is essential to business development, and the sense of security gives value to property.

IV. THESE TIMES GIVE INFLUENCE TO EVIL MEN. The demagogue finds then his opportunity. The masses of society gain undue importance. Noise has more power than intelligence. Reason's voice can seldom be heard. She keeps still, for it is an evil time.

V. THESE TIMES SERIOUSLY HINDER CHRISTIAN AND CHARITABLE ENTERPRISE. Diverting both energy and money. So seasons of political commotion become agencies in executing Divine judgments, and become times of national warning and correction.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Temptation to trust in diviners.* "They shall seek . . . to the charmers." "A time of panic, when the counsels of ordinary statesmen failed, was sure in Egypt, as at Athens in its times of peril, to be fruitful in oracles and divinations." The most remarkable instance recorded in Scripture is that of King Saul, who in his extremity, and after having himself driven the witches out of his land, imperilled his life to consult the witch of Endor. And even in these days there are most curious survivals of the old spirit, in the consultations of fortune-tellers, and the confidence placed in the guesses of prophesiers, and the vague generalities of so-called astrologers. Large numbers of ignorant and only partly educated people hold to this day their confidence in lucky and unlucky times, and their fears of thirteen at the table, the ticking of the death-watch, and the coffin-shaped cinder. In times of national distress men who pretend to prophesy find their harvest, and trade upon the fears and hopes of men.

I. THE UNIVERSAL DESIRE TO PIERCE THE UNSEEN AND THE FUTURE. On this desire rests the success of modern spiritualism. Where there is no restful confidence in God's love and lead, men try to force aside the veils that hide God and God's purposes from mortal view. Man can do so much in the present that he is fretted and annoyed because he can get no guarantees for to-morrow, and every day must act upon the uncertainty whether, for him, there will be any to-morrow. After this life, what then? Men are angry because no fellow-man has ever answered that question or ever can. Revelation from God can alone relieve the mystery. Show how in all ages men have peered into the dark future, and been compelled to confess that they could see nothing but the "folds of the wondrous veil."

II. THE MORAL REASONS WHY THE FUTURE IS HIDDEN FROM US. 1. It is necessary for our probation. 2. It prevents procrastination by impression of the supreme value of *now*. 3. It keeps from the self-security which nourishes free indulgence in sin. 4. It makes our life manifestly a life of faith.

III. THE REST WHICH RELIGION GIVES FROM THE CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE. Religion brings God into direct relations, and gracious relations, with the individual. Past, present, future, are all in God's control. If the soul is in right relations with God, the present is his overruling, and the future is his provision. If we are *with God*, all is well, *here or there*.—R. T.

Vers. 5—10.—*The withholding of God's gifts making man's woe.* These verses are suggestive of the thousandfold forms of trouble that follow on an unusually low Nile, or the failure of the Nile flood. It is peculiar to the valley of the Nile, and the Delta forming the land of Egypt, that cultivation of the soil depends upon the yearly flooding of the river, which, by canals, sluices, ponds, and ditches, is led over the fields as the great fertilizer. Holy Scripture gives us the picture of supreme distress following on the failure of the Nile for seven successive years in the times of Joseph. The complete dependence of the country on this periodical overflow, and the fact that all agricultural arrangements are adapted to this peculiarity, involved a remarkable helplessness throughout the land when the Nile failed to rise. The people could not do what they were accustomed to do, so they did not know what to do, and could not, in any effective way, make up for this calamity. If their river be dried up, their fruitful

land will soon be turned into barrenness, and their harvests cease. Two things are suggested for consideration.

I. THE WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH THINGS ARE LINKED TOGETHER. So that failure in one thing brings on a most varied train of evils. The prominent thing here is the failure of the Nile flood; but how many things are found to depend on that!—the basket-trade; the paper-trade; the farmer's trade; the fish-trade; the flax-trade; the net-trade; the builder's trade. So is it still. The cotton supply from America was checked a few years ago, and the consequences reached, in one way or another, all classes of society. Depressions in trade first affect one branch, but presently rise to the highest and descend to the lowest classes of society; and so it is again and again proved that, "we are members one of another."

II. THE WONDERFUL WAY IN WHICH ALL PROSPERITY IS MADE DEPENDENT ON THE FIRST GIFTS OF GOD. Man's riches are God's gifts. Man can never add to the wealth of the world by *exchanges*, which only vary the possessors. Air, rain, sunshine, water, electricity, coal, increase from field and beast, are man's riches; and these are first things that are absolutely dependent on God, and out of man's control. God withholds the rains, and a nation is in misery; God tempers the air, and plague sweeps away the multitudes; God stops the flood, and Egypt pines away in its helplessness. The source of all real good is God, in whose hands are the very springs and sources of all human happiness and prosperity.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Men's minds a sphere in which God's judgments may work.* "The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof." Failure in recognizing men's minds and wills, as spheres of Divine operation, makes difficult to us such cases as that of Pharaoh, whose heart the Lord is said to have hardened; or that of the prophets in the time of Ahab, amongst whom God had sent a "lying spirit." But the apostle distinctly taught that all the sides and all the forces of man's nature are in God's control, and that he can work his purposes through them all. Writing to the Romans (i. 28), Paul says of the Gentiles, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." And the heathen have a motto which embodies the same truth, "Whom the gods would destroy they first dement"—a sentence involving a belief in the control of the gods over men's *minds*. A further illustration may be found in the prayer offered by David in the time of his extreme peril: "O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Sam. xv. 31). This truth we can clearly see and fully accept.

I. GOD HAS CONTROL OVER MAN'S CIRCUMSTANCES. These are, undoubtedly, the usual spheres of Divine operation. Life in the midst of varying circumstances, and subject to the influence of circumstances, is our present lot. God's providence we assume to have its sphere in *things* and *events;* and too easily we may come to limit God's working to the incidents of life, and keep him entirely in the external spheres, reaching us only through our senses. So we need to have set before us the further and more searching truth, that—

II. GOD HAS CONTROL OVER MAN'S MIND AND HEART. This may be difficult to harmonize with our notions of man's free-will and independence. But man's free-will is not an absolute thing; it is set within careful and precise limitations. Man has liberty within a tether; and he cannot be trusted beyond the tether. God never looses his hold on him. The point, however, which especially calls for illustration and enforcement here is, that God may execute his *judgments* on man in the sphere of his *mind*. A state of stubbornness, perversity, and hardening may be traced by man as the natural response of certain minds to certain circumstances. We are taught to look deeper, and see in bad mental states and moods not Divine permissions only, but Divine operations and Divine judgments. The mental blindness and deafness, the narrow-mindedness, the sceptical tendency, of a particular age, we view aright when we regard as Divine judgment working towards humility.—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The cry of distress after the true God.* The erection of the altar and the pillar would be a sign of desire after God. "In Isaiah's time it must have seemed incredible that the firmly organized idolatrous system of Egypt should ever be broken up. Yet such a result was brought about by a series of movements—Assyrian,

Babylonian, Persian, and Greek—which commenced almost immediately after the date of the above prediction. In the district of Heliopolis, on the site of a ruined temple at Leontopolis (twenty miles north-east of Memphis), the high priest Onias IV. built his temple, under a special licence from Ptolemy Philometor (about B.C. 150)." The chapter deals with the corrective judgments which were to come upon Egypt, and gives this prophecy as the assurance that they will in measure prove efficient; and Egypt in her distress will cry after the true God; and the presence of Jews in her midst would give direction to her cry. We only suggest the following topics for illustration:—

I. THE MISSION OF ALL NATIONAL DISTRESS IS CONVINCEMENT OF THE CLAIMS OF GOD.

II. THE PRESSURE OF NATIONAL DISTRESS IS A PERSUASION TO CALL UPON GOD.

III. THE ARRANGEMENTS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE ALWAYS HELP MEN'S DESIRE TO SEEK GOD. Illustrated in the fact that Jews were settled in Egypt, and witnessing for Jehovah, when the people's hearts were turning towards him. From this we may proceed to show how our establishing missions in various parts of heathendom proves to be providential help afforded to peoples who have begun to cry after God. *Our* "altar" and our "pillar" are thus for "a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts." —R. T.

Ver. 22.—*God both Smiter and Healer.* "The meaning is not simply that the stroke should be followed by healing, nor is it simply that the stroke should possess a healing virtue; but both ideas seem to be included." The full thought is expressed by the Prophet Hosea (vi. 1, 2), "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." Henderson says, "The doctrine here taught is, that when God has purposes of mercy towards a sinful people, he will continue to visit them with calamities till they are humbled, and thus brought into a fit state for appreciating the value of his mercies." For illustrations of the same view of God's working, see Job v. 17—19; ch. lvii. 15—19; Hos. v. 15. There are few conceptions of God which should seem so tender and so restfully satisfying as this to conscious sinners who long to be freed from their sins. God will not leave us alone; he will *smite.* God will watch the effects of his smiting, and take the first opportunity to *heal.* God never smites save with the prospect before him of healing, and with gracious intentions of making his healings an unspeakable blessing—"the intention of healing is predominant throughout" (comp. Zeph. iii. 8, 9; Jer. xii. 5—7).

I. THESE TWO THINGS—SMITING AND HEALING—ARE OFTEN SEVERED IN MAN. 1. Some smite for others to heal. 2. Some smite in malice, and do not want us to be healed. 3. Some smite in wilfulness, and do not care whether we are healed. 4. Some smite in kindness, but are unable to heal the wounds they make. And so often men do not know how to smite, though they mean well, and so the wounds they make are mischievous, and only wounds, not really corrective agencies. Man's bungling ways in smiting and healing, make us say, after David, "Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of man."

II. THESE TWO THINGS—SMITING AND HEALING—ARE ALWAYS UNITED IN GOD. 1. In God's thought. 2. In God's arrangement. 3. Given time enough, also in God's action. Because of the union God's smitings can always be severe enough to be efficient. He can venture to smite harder than any man can ever do. But God's wounds never go beyond his healing power. The most striking illustration is perhaps that set before us in the story of Job. In dealing with him we know not which to admire most—God's wonderful smitings, God's wonderful healings, or the gracious way in which the smitings and the healings fitted in together.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*The God-fearing man a blessing wherever he is found.* Israel is the type of the God-fearing man, and it is prophesied of Israel, as a nation, that when it is linked in friendly alliance with Egypt and Assyria, its testimony for the true God, and its example of noble living in the fear of God, would make it a blessing in the lands. The prophecy was fulfilled in the time of the Hasmonean princes. Compare

the promise made to Abraham, as a man of God and man of faith, that "in him, and in his seed, all nations of the earth should be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18). Scripture intimates that the Jews have been the great conservators of the two foundation-truths, of (1) God's unity and (2) God's spirituality, for the whole world, and that they are yet to be the great agents in the conversion of the world to God, as revealed in Jesus Christ; and perhaps no race is so widely scattered over the earth, or so efficiently represented in all lands, as the Jews. They may be a "blessing" indeed, when the veil is taken away, and they see in Jesus of Nazareth the world's Messiah and Saviour. We, however, for the purpose of this homily, think of the Jew in the world as representing the godly man set in various circumstances, and exercising a gracious influence in his circle, whatever it may be. He is a source of blessing, a means of blessing, and an object of blessing.

I. HE IS A SOURCE OF BLESSING. This term brings up for consideration his *unconscious* influence—the blessing which flows from the good man, by virtue of what he *is*, rather than of what he *does*. A beautiful picture, a work of perfect art, a gracious and gentle-mannered person, exert power for good apart from conscious intention. And so the pure are the "salt of the earth."

II. HE IS A MEANS OF BLESSING. This term brings to view his *conscious* influence. For the good man lies under trust, and wants to be faithful. And the good man, by virtue of his goodness, is full of concern for the well-being of others; so his life must be an active charity. Like his Master, he is "ever going about, doing good," inventing ways in which he can become a blessing.

III. HE IS AN OBJECT TO BE BLESSED. By God, whose work he is doing, whose Name he is honouring, and whose service he is commending. God never forgets our work of faith and labour of love, but ensures that all who are *a blessing* are *blessed*.—R. T.

Ver. 25.—*All nations belonging unto God.* This is a singular and even surprising expression. These nations were idolatrous, and they came under severe Divine judgments, and yet God claims them as his, and even declares his favour towards them, using the same terms concerning Egypt and Assyria as concerning his own people Israel, and saying, "Blessed is my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and mine inheritance Israel." 'Speaker's Commentary' says, "The widespread influence of the Jews over Syria, and the adjacent countries under the Syro-Macedonian kings, as well as over Egypt under the Ptolemies, may represent an initial stage in the fulfilment of the prophecy. A second stage commenced with that great day, which sent devout men back from Jerusalem into Egypt and Libya on one side, into Parthia, Media, Elam, and Mesopotamia, on the other (Acts ii. 9, 10), to tell how "God, having raised up his Son Jesus" (the Prince and the Saviour), had sent him to bless "the Jews first, and in them all nations."

I. AS INDIVIDUALS, COMPOSING NATIONS, ALL MEN ARE GOD'S CREATION. So he has natural rights in them all. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" then "Come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

II. AS LOCATED IN PARTICULAR POSITIONS, NATIONS HAVE THE BOUNDS OF THEIR HABITATIONS APPOINTED BY GOD. See St. Paul's argument in Acts xvii. 26.

III. AS ENDOWED WITH NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS, ALL NATIONS ARE CALLED TO THE SERVICE OF GOD. For nations have special *gifts*, as truly as individuals; and wherever there are gifts there must be responsibility. The *genius* of every nation is its special ability to witness for and work for God. It has been well said that Israel, Greece, and Rome were three countries of God's election; Israel called to witness for religion, Greece for art, and Rome for law. But a similar statement might be made concerning every nation.

IV. AS UNDER MORAL TRIAL, ALL NATIONS ARE WITHIN THE SUPERVISION OF GOD. The true way to regard national history and experiences is this: In them, God's dealings with individuals find open and public illustration; and so individuals may learn moral lessons that have personal application to themselves.

V. AS NEEDING A REDEEMER, ALL NATIONS SHARE IN THE ONE PROVISION MADE BY GOD. God loves the world. All have sinned. There is only one Name, but by it all men everywhere may be saved.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XX.

Vers. 1—6.—A PROPHECY AGAINST EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA. The Assyrian inscriptions enable us to date this prophecy with a near approach to exactness. Ashdod was besieged by an Assyrian army twice in the reign of Sargon—in his ninth year (B.C. 713) and in his eleventh year (B.C. 711). On the former occasion it is probable that the arms of a general (Tartan) were employed; on the latter it is nearly certain that Sargon made the expedition in person. The capture of Ashdod, here mentioned, is consequently the first capture. Egypt and Ethiopia were at the time united under one head, Shabak, or Shabatok; and the inhabitants of Ashdod looked to this quarter for deliverance from the Assyrian power. Shortly after the first capture, they revolted, deposed the king whom Sargon had set over them, appointed another, and then proceeded, in conjunction with Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab, to call in the aid of the Egyptians and Ethiopians. Isaiah's mission on this occasion was to discourage Judæa from joining Ashdod and her allies in this appeal. He was instructed to prophesy that Assyria would shortly inflict a severe defeat on the two African powers, and carry into captivity large numbers of both nations. The prophecy seems to have had its accomplishment about twelve years later, when Sennacherib defeated the combined forces of Egypt and Ethiopia at Eltekeh, near Ekron (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 133).

Ver. 1.—**In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod**; rather, *a tartan*. The word was not a proper name, but a title of office, equivalent to *surena* among the Parthians, and signifying "commander-in-chief." The tartan held the second position in the empire. Isaiah has been accused of having confounded together the two sieges of Ashdod (Cheyne); but if one was conducted by the tartan, and the other by Sargon in person, his words would distinguish as perfectly as possible which siege he meant. **When Sargon the King of Assyria sent him.** The present passage furnished almost the sole trace of the existence of this monarch—one of the greatest of Assyria's sovereigns—until about the middle of the present century, when the exploration of the Assyrian ruins, and the decipherment of the Assyrian inscriptions, presented him to us in the most distinct and vivid way, as king, conqueror, and builder. He was the founder of the last and greatest of the Assyrian dynasties, the successor of the biblical Shalmaneser, and the father of Sennacherib. He reigned from B.C. 722 to B.C. 705. He was the captor of Samaria; he defeated the forces of Egypt; he warred on Susiana, Media, Armenia, Asia Minor, Cyprus; and he conquered and held in subjection Babylon. He built the great city explored by M. Botta, near Khorsabad, which is sometimes called "the French Nineveh." It is now found that Ptolemy's 'Canon' contains his name under the form of Arkeanus, and that Yacut's 'Geography' mentions his great city under the form of Sarghun. But these facts were unsuspected until the recent explorations in Mesopotamia, and Isaiah's mention of him alone gave him a place in history. **And fought against Ashdod, and took it.** Ashdod was the strongest of the Philistine cities, and one of the most ancient (Josh. xv. 47). Its name is probably derived from a root meaning "strength." We hear of its having stood on one occasion a siege of twenty-nine years (Herod., ii. 157). It is now known as *Esdud*. When Ashdod is first mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions it is tributary to Sargon, having probably submitted to him in B.C. 720, after the battle of Raphia. It soon, however, revolts and reclaims its independence. In B.C. 713 the Assyrians proceed against it; and its capture is implied by the facts that the Assyrians depose its king, and install one of his brothers as monarch in his room (comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 34).

Ver. 2.—**Loose the sackcloth from off thy loins.** Dr. Kay supposes that Isaiah was wearing sackcloth exceptionally, as during a time of mourning. But it is more probable that the Hebrew *sak* represents the haircloth ("rough garment," Zech. xiii. 4), which, as ascetics, the Hebrew prophets wore habitually (2 Kings i. 8; Matt. iii. 4). **Walking naked.** Probably not actually "naked," for captives were not stripped bare by the Assyrians, but with nothing on besides his short tunic, as the male captives are commonly represented in the Assyrian sculptures.

Ver. 3.—**My servant Isaiah.** Isaiah shares this honourable title, "my servant," with a select few among God's saints—with Abraham (Gen. xxvi. 24), Moses (Numb. xii. 7), Caleb (Numb. xiv. 24), Job (Job i. 8; xlii. 7, 8), Eliakim (ch. xxii. 20), and Zerubbabel (Hag. ii. 23). It is a great acknowledgment for the Creator to make to the creature, that

he really does him service. **Three years.** Probably from B.C. 713 to B.C. 711, or during the whole of the time that Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Judah were making representations to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and endeavouring to obtain their aid (see G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 130). It has been proposed, by an arbitrary emendation, to cut down the time to "three days;" but a three days' sign of the kind could not have been expected to have any important effect. The supposed "impropriety" of Isaiah's having "gone naked and barefoot" for three years arises from a misconception of the word "naked," which is not to be taken literally (see the comment on ver. 2). The costume adopted would be extraordinary, especially in one of Isaiah's rank and position; but would not be in any degree "improper." It would be simply that of working men during the greater part of the day (see Exod. xxii. 26, 27).

Ver. 4.—**So shall the King of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives.** In Sennacherib's annals for the year B.C. 701, twelve years after this prophecy was given, we find the following passage: "The kings of Egypt, and the archers, chariots, and horsemen of the King of Meroe, a force without number, gathered and came to the aid of Ekron. In the neighbourhood of Eltekeh their ranks were arrayed before me, and they urged on their soldiers. In the service of Asshur, my lord, I fought with them, and I accomplished their overthrow. *The charioteers and sons of the kings of Egypt, and the charioteers of the King of Meroe, alive in the midst of the battle, my hand captured*" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 133, 134). **Young and old.** The intermixture of young and old, of full-grown males with women leading children by the hand or carrying them upon the shoulder, in the Assyrian sculptures, strikes us even on the most cursory inspection of them. **Naked and barefoot.** Assyrian captives are ordinarily represented "barefoot." Most commonly they wear a single tunic, reaching from the neck to the knees, or sometimes to the ankles, and girt about the waist with a girdle. It is probable that Egyptian and Ethiopian prisoners would be even more scantily clad, since the ordinary Egyptian tunic began at the waist and ended considerably above the knee.

Ver. 5.—**They shall be afraid and ashamed.** Those who have resorted to Egypt and Ethiopia for aid shall be "ashamed" of their folly in doing so, and "afraid" of its consequences (see the last clause of ver. 6).

Ver. 6.—**The inhabitant of this isle;** rather, *of this coast* (Knobel, Hitzig, Kay); *i.e.* of Palestine generally, which was a mere strip of coast compared with Egypt and Ethiopia. Sargon speaks of all the four powers who at this time "sought to Egypt," as "dwelling beside the sea" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 130). **Such is our expectation;** rather, *so hath it gone with our expectation;* i.e. with Egypt and Ethiopia.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Foolish trust rebuked by a strange sign.* Few things are so difficult as to bring men to rely wholly and solely upon God. The circumstances of the time were these. Humanly speaking, Judæa lay absolutely at the mercy of Assyria. There was no existing power or combination of powers that could successfully contend at the time against the vast bodies of well-armed and well-disciplined soldiers which a king of Assyria could bring into the field. Nothing could prolong Jewish independence for more than a few years but some miraculous interposition of God on behalf of the Jewish people. But for God to interpose miraculously, it was necessary that implicit trust should be placed in him (Mark vi. 5; ix. 23, etc.). The Jews, however, could not bring themselves to believe that they had no help but Jehovah. They thought Egypt, or Egypt and Ethiopia combined, might well prove a match for Assyria, and were bent on placing themselves under the protection of the combined powers. The lesson of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, which had trusted in Egypt (2 Kings xvii. 4), and then been destroyed by Assyria, was lost on them. In connection with Ashdod, they had actually sent ambassadors to Egypt to intreat assistance (ch. xxx. 1—4). Then it was that Isaiah received the special mission which was to warn his countrymen of the utter folly of trusting to human aid. For three years he was to wear the scant clothing that Assyrian captives ordinarily wore, announcing that he did so in token that ere long the warriors of Egypt and Ethiopia would be seen thus clad, on their way from Egypt to captivity at Nineveh. The unusual attire of the prophet could not but create a great sensation. It probably made a considerable impression on Hezekiah and his counsellors. It was not forgotten; and if it did not at once cause the negotiations with Egypt to be broken off, it produced the result that, when Isaiah's prediction was fulfilled

after the battle of Eltekeh, the Jewish monarch and people did in their trouble turn to God. At the crisis of his danger, Hezekiah made appeal to the Almighty (ch. xxxvii. 4); and his appeal was followed by that destruction of the Assyrian host (ch. xxxvii. 36) which caused the Assyrians to respect and fear the Jews thenceforward, and to allow them to retain their independence. Thus the life of the Jewish monarchy was extended for above a century.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The prophet as a sign.* I. THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. The illusion of Egyptian unity had passed away again. The country was broken up under the rule of a number of petty kings, of whom Shabak, or So, or Seve (2 Kings xvii. 4), was one. Negotiations seem to have been begun between Judah and Egypt, probably as a resource against the Assyrian. Ashdod was laid siege to by the Assyrians about B.C. 713—711, and the inhabitants carried off captives. And Judah's name appears in the Assyrian inscriptions among the nations guilty of treason to Assyria. Isaiah, both as the prophet and the politician, is seen to be opposed to the Egyptian alliance. And his policy seems to have been justified by the event, for Judah was subsequently invaded and subdued. When the tartan, or Assyrian general, came to Ashdod, sent by King Sargon, the spirit of Isaiah was stirred within him.

II. THE SYMBOLIC ACT OF THE PROPHET. He takes his distinctive dress of hair-cloth from his loins, and is "bare," in that sense in which the Roman soldier was said to be *nudus* without his armour. So the Prophet Micah says he will wail and howl, and go stripped and naked, because of the desolation of the land. The reader will be reminded of George Fox at Lichfield, and of Solomon Eagle preaching repentance to the people amidst the horrors of the Plague of London (1665), of which scene there was an affecting picture by Poole in the Royal Academy winter exhibition of 1884. The act is: 1. *Expressive of strong feeling;* suited to Oriental effusiveness, though not to our colder habits. The mind needs, in moments of strong feeling, to see itself reflected in some outward form. We all acknowledge this in connection with the great epochs of life—the funeral, the wedding. The great heart of the prophet throbbing in sympathy with his nation, must signify his grief at its condition by some change in his attire. And then: 2. *It is a means of impressing others.* We speak, not only by our words, but by our appearance, our apparel, our manners. Though we are not called upon in our time to adopt a peculiar dress, that dress should betoken a serious mind. Inconspicuousness may serve as good an end as conspicuousness in this matter. Let us at least, without straining a point, learn this lesson, that life should be *significant.* It should mean something; not be neutral, utterly without emphasis; or dubious to the eye and ear, like heathen oracles and heathen symbols. Without affectation and folly, we can find a way to make others feel that we feel and think and have a purpose in existence. But this way of self-manifestation must be adapted to our own constitution, to the taste of others, to the condition of our times.

III. THE APPLICATION OF THE SYMBOLISM. Egypt and Ethiopia will fall into humiliation and captivity. There will be every sign of disgrace. And Judah will see the fallacy of having put her trust in Egyptian alliances. It is a deeply painful picture of a nation's shame that rises before us in these verses. Shameless sins bring shameful punishment. "Conquest and captivity are perhaps the bitterest cup that vengeance can put into the hands of a sinful people." This general lesson, then, may be drawn: The effect not only points to the cause, but the nature of the effect to the nature of the cause. "Of all the curses which can possibly befall a sinner, there is none comparable to this, that he should add iniquity to iniquity, and sin to sin, which the shameless person cannot but do, till he falls by it too; his recovery, while under that character, being utterly impossible. For where there is no place for shame, there can be none for repentance. God of his infinite goodness work better minds in us!" (South).—J.

Vers. 1—3.—*Unpleasant service.* It may always remain uncertain whether Isaiah went stripped and barefoot for three whole years or for a shorter period. Two things, however, are quite certain, viz. that for some time, longer or shorter, this servant of

Jehovah (ver. 3) went about Jerusalem in that humiliating condition, and that he would have unhesitatingly done this *all* the time if God had required him to do so. Many suggestions have been made on the subject, but it does not occur to any one to entertain the idea that Isaiah would decline to render such an unpleasant service, however long the period of service might be.

I. THAT GOD SOMETIMES DEMANDS OF US SERVICE WHICH WE FIND IT HARD TO RENDER. It may be: 1. *To incur the hostility of those whose honour and affection we would fain enjoy.* Isaiah had to pronounce against an alliance with Egypt and Ethiopia, thus stirring up the active dislike of those politicians who advised that course. We may often have to take a course which is regarded and denounced as unpatriotic or disloyal. 2. *To endure privation as the consequence of fidelity.* Isaiah, in the fulfilment of his prophetic mission, went half-clad through all changes of temperature. In order to speak the true and faithful word which God has put into our mind, or to take the right course which he opens before us, we may have to do that which will lessen our resources and lead to straitened means and even to serious embarrassment. 3. *To expose ourselves to the derision of the sceptic or the scoffing.* Doubtless the partisans of Egypt sneered and the idle multitude mocked as the unclothed prophet passed by. It is hard to have to utter that truth or to identify ourselves with that course which entails the bitter raillery of the opponent and the heartless jest of the ribald crowd. But "my servant Isaiah walked naked and barefoot" as long as he was charged to do so. And we conclude—

II. THAT WE CANNOT HESITATE TO RENDER INSTANT AND FULL COMPLIANCE. For: 1. God's demand is absolute and authoritative. If the filial son hastens to do the behest of his father, the loyal subject that of his king, the brave soldier that of his commander, however uninviting or even perilous it may be, how much more shall we render instant and hearty obedience to the "Do this" of our heavenly Father, of our Divine Redeemer. 2. God asks us to do that which is small and slight indeed in comparison with the service which, in Jesus Christ, he has rendered us. What are the privations, the insults, the humiliations we may be summoned to endure for Christ when compared with the poverty and the shame and the sorrow to which he stooped for us? 3. Our unpleasant work is *prior*, and perhaps *preparatory*, to nobler and more congenial service further on. Faithful in the "few things" now and here, we shall have rule given us over "many things" in the coming years, and still more truly in the better land.—C.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The insufficiency of the stronger.* Assyria attacked Ashdod with designs on Judæa. Judæa rested on Egypt and Ethiopia; but these "powers" would be utterly defeated by Assyria, and their citizens led away into captivity with every circumstance of humiliation and shame. In that hour of fear and humiliation (ver. 5) the inhabitants of Judæa would be constrained to argue from the insufficiency of Egypt and Ethiopia to their own helplessness. If such strong nations as these are ignominiously overthrown, "how shall *we* escape"? We conclude—

I. THAT TIMES OF SEVERE TRIAL AWAIT US ALL. Not only collectively but individually considered. As separate, individual souls we must anticipate that the future has in store for us not only the pleasant, the gratifying, the successful, but also the unpleasant, the painful, even the overwhelming. Some of the more crushing sorrows it may be our fortune to escape, but every one of us will have his share. Sickness which threatens to be fatal; bitter disappointment which appears to throw the whole future path into darkest shadow; bereavement which takes away the very light of our eyes; the sudden loss which strips the tree of branch as well as bloom; the financial or (what is a thousand times worse) the moral failure of beloved friend or near relation; the last illness unexpectedly arriving and extinguishing many a cherished purpose; the powerful temptation inviting and almost constraining to folly, or vice, or crime;—one or more of these things, or things as bad as these, will certainly overtake us all.

II. THAT THOSE WHO ARE STRONGER THAN WE ARE SOMETIMES FOUND TO BREAK BENEATH THE BLOW. We hear or read of men who in mental capacity, in educational advantages, in worldly endowments, or in the number of their friends, are superior to ourselves, but who cannot stand the strain of their trial. Either their health breaks down, or their sanity seriously suffers, or their faith fails, or their courage and energy

succumb, or their moral character is lost, and consequently their reputation is shattered, never to be restored.

III. THAT IF THESE STRONGER SOULS ARE BEATEN, WE MUST BE IN DANGER OF DEFEAT. If Egypt and Ethiopia are led into captivity, how shall Judæa be delivered—"how shall we escape"? The storm in which such noble vessels founder will wreck our fragile bark. On any ordinary human calculations we cannot hope to be victorious where spirits so much stronger and wiser than we are have been crushed. But we need not yield to despondency; if we are the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, and if, therefore, "the Lord is on our side," we may find relief and rest in the thought—

IV. THAT WE HAVE A SAFE REFUGE IN AN ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR. So long as Judæa was faithful to Jehovah, she had no need to be afraid of Assyria, and she could afford to witness the overthrow of the Egyptian and Ethiopian armies. So long as we are loyal to our Divine Lord we may go fearlessly forward into the future. If the good Shepherd—"the great Shepherd of the sheep"—be our Guardian, we will "fear no evil," though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, though the darkest shadows shut us round.—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Divine revelation in actions as well as words.* The language is somewhat uncertain, but it seems better to understand that, for three years, Isaiah was seen going to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, having the dress and appearance of one who was already a prisoner of war, ready to be led into an ignominious exile. Isaiah wore no upper or outer garment, and no sandals, so that, when his dress was compared with that of others, he might be said to go naked; but "naked" in Scripture usually means "with only under-garments on." The three years were, perhaps, designed to represent three incursions of the Assyrians. The general topic suggested is the variety of forms which Divine revelations may take; the diversity of agencies which Divine revelation may employ. All modes by which man may be reached and influenced God may take up and use for conveying his mind and will.

I. REVELATION IN NATURE. We often speak of a *voice* in nature. That voice God may employ. The beautiful, the sublime, the gentle, affect us, and bring to us thoughts of God's goodness, wisdom, and power. This kind of revelation St. Paul recognizes, pleading thus at Lystra (Acts xiv. 17), "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness;" and writing thus to the Romans (Rom. i. 20), "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." What is called natural religion is that common knowledge of God, and of our duty to God, which comes through nature alone; and God has so made us kin with nature, has so set us in relation with an external world, that we can receive moral impressions through it.

II. REVELATION IN INCIDENTS. Events of personal life and of public history convey God's mind to us. And therefore so much of our Bible is but a treasured record of facts and incidents. Our Lord's life on the earth was full of incidents, and we find in these the truths which God purposed, by Christ, to teach us. We are constantly receiving fresh revelations, new to us individually, though not new to the world, through the circumstances of public or of private life. We often think of this as God's voice in providence.

III. REVELATION IN MINDS. Or in those parts of man that are distinct from the senses. What we think of as the spiritual nature of man, including his conscience. God's witness in this part of our being is argued by St. Paul, when, writing of the heathen, to whom a book revelation has not been given, he says (Rom. ii. 15), "Which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." We must guard against the notion that God has put all his will into a book, and has now no direct access to our souls. What is true is that we can test all direct revelations by their harmony with the revelation that is written.

IV. REVELATION IN SYMBOLS. Since symbols do convey ideas to men, God may use them. Illustrate by vision of divided pieces to Abraham; pillar of cloud to

Israel; angel with drawn sword to David; fire-flash to Israel on Carmel, etc. And, to take symbols of another character, the prophets acted things before the people, making impressions without employing words—as Isaiah here; as Zedekiah's horns (1 Kings xxii. 11); Jeremiah's yokes (xxvii. 2); Ezekiel's lying on his side (iv. 4); and Agabus' binding himself with his girdle (Acts xxi. 11).

V. REVELATION IN WORDS. The more ordinary method of communication between man and man. This opens up the opportunity of showing (1) the reasonableness and (2) the practical efficiency of a book revelation, and of commending that collection of revelations which we call Holy Scripture. Howsoever God may be pleased to speak to us, our duty is to heed, listening with the cherished purpose that we will carry out the Divine will in all holy and loving obedience.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*The bitter experience of all who trust in man.* The sin of Judah, in its latter days, was its reliance on Egypt for help rather than on God. In alarm at the advance of Assyria, the natural alliance was with Egypt; but alliance with any world-power was unworthy of a nation whose history had been so full of Divine deliverings and defendings as that of the Jews. And Egypt could not help. It was a broken reed. A type of all merely human helpers; for "cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Hosea represents Israel as finding out how vain is the help of man, and turning to God with this penitential promise, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods." The following three points open up lines of thought and illustration, and should be sufficiently suggestive without detailed treatment.

I. WE CANNOT TRUST MAN, FOR WE CANNOT BE SURE OF HIS GOOD WILL. These two dangers are ever before us: 1. The man who seems willing to serve us may be deceiving us, and really serving his own ends, setting his interests before ours. 2. And if a man begins sincerely to serve us, we have no security that his good will is maintained, and presently he may take advantage of us. We cannot read hearts. And hearts do not always keep steadfast. So "put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help."

II. WE CANNOT TRUST MAN, FOR WE CANNOT BE SURE THAT HIS ABILITY MATCHES HIS WILL. So often we find in life that men who *could*, *will* not help us, and men who *would*, *cannot*. With this sort of feeling in his mind the sufferer came to the "Man Christ Jesus," saying, "If thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean."

III. WE CAN NEVER RECKON ON MAN IF HE IS AGAINST GOD. Such a man can never be any help to us. The Jews forsook God to seek help from a godless nation, and it was bound to prove a bitter and humiliating experience. Man may be, and often is, God's agent for helping us; but then our trusting is in God who sends, and not in the man who may be sent to do his bidding.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*A grave question with many applications.* "How shall we escape?" Egypt being reduced, no defence remained for Israel against the overwhelming power of Assyria. "This was the cry of despair at Jerusalem. But in such despair was her only hope. The destruction of Egypt and Ethiopia by the arms of Sennacherib weaned her from looking any longer to earthly powers for help, and raised her eyes to heaven" (Bishop Wordsworth). The expression, or exclamation, may be—

I. APPLIED TO PERSONAL TROUBLES. Oftentimes in life we are brought to extremities; we know not what to do, nor which way to take. In our difficulties, hedged in on every side, we cry out, "How shall we escape?" The Israelites cried thus when the Red Sea rolled before them, a wall of mountains barred the path, and an enraged foe hurried upon them from behind. The secret of peace and deliverance is, "Trust in the Lord, who maketh ways in the seas, and paths in the great waters."

II. APPLIED TO THE POWER OF SIN. When it has become the enslavement of fixed habit. Compare St. Paul's exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And see his triumphant answer, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

III. APPLIED TO THE PENALTIES OF SINNING. The "fearful looking for of

judgment and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversaries." The utter despair of escape is pictured in Scripture by the people crying to the very rocks to cover and hide them from the wrath of God and of the Lamb.

IV. APPLIED TO OUR PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES OF SALVATION. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews finds expression for this (ii. 2, 3): "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" This grave question—this great cry—may be the cry of hopeful self-humiliation and distrust; and then to it God will be sure to respond. But it may be the cry of hopeless despair, the conviction that the day of grace is passed, that it is "too late;" and then God's response must be holding aloof, and letting the overwhelming judgments come, if even thus at last the true humiliations may be wrought.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1—10.—THE BURDEN OF THE DESERT OF THE SEA. This is a short and somewhat vague, but highly poetic, "burden of Babylon" It is probably an earlier prophecy than ch. xiii. and xiv., and perhaps the first revelation made to Isaiah with respect to the fall of the great Chaldean capital. It exhibits no consciousness of the fact that Babylon is Judah's predestined destroyer, and is expressive rather of sympathy (vers. 3, 4) than of triumph. Among recent critics, some suppose it to refer to Sargon's capture of the city in B.C. 710; but the objection to this view, from the entire absence of all reference to Assyria as the conquering power, and the mention of "Elam" and "Media" in her place, is absolutely fatal to it. There can be no reasonable doubt that the same siege is intended as in ch. xiii., where also Media is mentioned (ver. 17); and there are no real grounds for questioning that the event of which the prophet is made cognizant is that siege and capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Great which destroyed the Babylonian empire.

Ver. 1.—**The desert of the sea.** The Isaianic authorship of this title is doubtful, since "the desert of the sea" is an expression elsewhere wholly unknown to biblical writers. Some regard "the sea" as the Euphrates, in which case "the desert of the sea" may be the waste tract west of the Euphrates, extending thence to the eastern borders of Palestine. **As whirlwinds in the south pass through**; rather, *as whirlwinds in the south country, sweeping along.* The "south country" is that immediately to the south of Judæa. Its liability to whirlwinds is noticed in Zech. ix. 14 and in Job xxxvii. 9 (compare Major Palmer's 'Sinai,' p. 33). **It cometh.** What cometh? Dr. Kay says, "God's visitation;" Rosenmüller, "a numerous army." But is it not rather the "grievous vision" of the next verse? **From the desert.** The *great* desert bounding Palestine on the east—a truly "terrible land." Across this, as coming from Babylonia to Palestine, seemed to rush the vision which it was given to the prophet to see.

Ver. 2.—**A grievous vision**; literally, *a hard vision*; not, however, "hard of interpretation" (Kay), but rather "hard to be borne," "grievous," "calamitous." **The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously**; rather, perhaps, *the robber robs* (Knobel); or, *the violent man uses violence* (Rosenmüller). The idea of faithlessness passes out of the Hebrew *bôgêd* occasionally, and is unsuitable here, more especially if it is the army of Cyrus that is intended. **Go up, O Elam.** The discovery that Cyrus, at the time of his conquest of Babylon, bore the title of "King of Ansan," not "King of Persia," coupled with the probability that "Ansan" was a part of Elam, lends a peculiar interest to these words. Isaiah could not describe Cyrus as "King of Persia," and at the same time be intelligible to his contemporaries, since Persia was a country utterly unknown to them. In using the term "Elam" instead, he uses that of a country known to the Hebrews (Gen. xiv. 1), adjoining Persia, and, at the time of his expedition against Babylon, subject to Cyrus. **Besiege, O Media.** Having given "Elam" the first place, the prophet assigns to Media the second. Eleven years before he attacked Babylon, Cyrus had made war upon Astyages (Istuvegu), King of the Medes, had captured him, and become king of the nation, with scarcely any opposition (see the 'Cylinder of Nabonidus'). Hence the Medes would naturally form an important portion of the force which he led against Babylon. **All the sighing thereof have I made to cease.** The "sighing" caused

by Babylon to the nations, to the captives, and to the kings whose prison-doors were kept closed (ch. xiv. 17), God has in his counsels determined to bring to an end.

Ver. 3.—**Therefore are my loins filled with pain**, etc. (comp. above, ch. xv. 5; xvi. 9—11). The prophet is horrorstruck at the vision shown him—at the devastation, the ruin, the carnage (ch. xiii. 18). He does not stop to consider how well deserved the punishment is; he does not, perhaps, as yet know how that, in smiting Babylon, God will be specially avenging the sufferings of his own nation (see the introductory paragraph). **I was bowed down at the hearing**, etc.; rather, *I am so agonized that I cannot hear; I am so terrified that I cannot see.*

Ver. 4.—**My heart panted**; rather, *my heart trembleth*, or *fluttereth*. **The night of my pleasure**; *i.e.* "the night, wherein, I am wont to enjoy peaceful and pleasant slumbers."

Ver. 5.—**Prepare the table**, etc. With lyrical abruptness, the prophet turns from his own feelings to draw a picture of Babylon at the time when she is attacked. He uses historical infinitives, the most lively form of narrative. Translate, *They deck the table, set the watch, eat, drink*; i.e. having decked the table, they commit the task of watching to a few, and then give themselves up to feasting and revelling, as if there were no danger. It is impossible not to think of Belshazzar's feast, and the descriptions of the Greek historians (Herod., i. 191; Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 23), which mark at any rate the strength of the tradition that, when Babylon was taken, its inhabitants were engaged in revelry. **Arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.** In the midst of the feast there enters to the revellers one from the outside, with these words, "Rise, quit the banquet; get your shields; anoint them; arm yourselves." That shields were greased with fat or oil before being used in battle appears from Virg., 'Æneid,' vii. 625, and other places. It was thought that the enemy's weapons would more readily glance off an oiled surface.

Ver. 6.—**Go, set a watchman.** The event is not to be immediate, it is to be watched for; and Isaiah is not to watch himself, but to set the watchman. Moreover, the watchman waits long before he sees anything (ver. 8). These unusual features of the narrative seem to mark a remote, not a near, accomplishment of the prophecy.

Ver. 7.—**And he saw . . . he hearkened**; rather, *he shall see . . . he shall hearken* (Kay). He is to wait and watch until he sees a certain sight; then he is to listen attentively, and he will hear the crash of the falling city. **A chariot with a couple of horsemen**; rather, *a troop of horsemen riding two and two.* This is exactly how a cavalry force was ordinarily represented by the Assyrians. Chariots are not intended either here or in ver. 9. They were not employed by the Persians until a late period of their history (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iv. pp. 113, 122). **A chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels**; rather, *men mounted on asses and on camels.* It is well known that both animals were employed by the Persians in their expeditions to carry the baggage (Herod., i. 80; iv. 129; Xen., 'Cyrop.,' vii. 1, etc.). But neither animal was ever attached to a chariot.

Ver. 8.—**And he cried, A lion**; rather, *he cried as a lion*; i.e. with a loud deep voice (comp. Rev. x. 3). The watchman, after long waiting, becomes impatient, and can contain himself no longer. He makes complaint of his long vain watch. **My lord**; rather, *O Lord.* The watchman addresses his complaint to Jehovah.

Ver. 9.—**And, behold, here cometh**, etc. Our translators make the words those of the watchman. But they are better taken as the prophet's statement of a fact, "And behold, just then there cometh a troop of men, riding two and two"—the sign for which he was to watch (ver. 7), or rather the first part of it. We must suppose the rest of the sign to follow, and the watchman then to listen awhile attentively. Suddenly he hears the sound of a sacked town, and he exclaims, **Babylon is fallen, is fallen**, etc. **All the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.** Recent documents, belonging to the time of Cyrus, and treating of his capture of Babylon, show that this expression is not to be understood literally. Cyrus was not an iconoclast; he did not break into pieces, or in any way destroy or insult the Babylonian idols. On the contrary, he maintained them in their several shrines, or restored them where they had been displaced; he professed himself a worshipper of the chief Babylonian gods—Bel, Nebo, and Merodach—he repaired the temple of Merodach; he prayed to Bel and Nebo to lengthen his days; he caused his son, Cambyses, to take part in the great religious ceremony wherewith the Babylonians opened the new year. Thus his conquest of Babylon did not bring upon its gods a physical, but only a moral, destruction. The Persian victory discredited and degraded them. It proclaimed to Western Asia that the idolatrous system so long prevalent in the region between Mount Zagros and the Mediterranean was no longer in the ascendant, but lay at the mercy of another quite different religion, which condescended to accord it toleration.

Such was the permanent result. No doubt there was also, in the sack of the city, much damage done to many of the idols by a greedy soldiery, who may have carried off many images of gold or silver, and broken up others that were not portable, and stripped off the plates of precious metal from the idols of "brass, and iron, and wood, and stone" (Dan. v. 6).

Ver. 10.—**O my threshing, and the corn of my floor.** These are the words of the prophet to Israel. Her chastisements have long been "threshing" Israel, separating the grain from the chaff, and will do so still more as time goes on. The prophet's message is for the comfort of those who shall have gone through the process and become the true "children of the threshing-floor"—pure wheat, fit to be gathered into the garner of God (Matt. iii. 12).

Vers. 11, 12.—THE BURDEN OF DUMAH. This short "burden" is probably to be understood as uttered with reference to Edom, which the prophet prefers to call "Dumah," *i.e.* "silence," in reference to the desolation which he sees to be coming upon the country. Such a play upon words is very usual in the East. Isaiah has already given an instance of it in the name under which he has designated Heliopolis (ch. xix. 18).

Ver. 11.—**Dumah.** There were at least two towns of this name ('Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. pp. 459, 460); but neither of them is in the district of Seir. It is best, therefore, to regard "Dumah" here as representing Edom, or Idumæa (so the LXX., Jarchi, Rosenmüller, Kay, Cheyne, and others). **He calleth to me**; rather, *one calleth to me*; i.e. I seem to hear a call from Mount Seir, as of one making inquiry of me. There is no need to suppose that the inquiry was actually made. Mount Seir, or the district south-south-east of the Dead Sea, was the heart of the Idumæan country, which thence extended vaguely eastward and westward. **What of the night?** *i.e.* what hour, or, rather, perhaps, what watch of the night is it? May we consider that "the night is far spent, and the day at hand"? Edom had offended Sargon by joining with Ashdod (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 130), and was probably at this time oppressed by Sargon in consequence.

Ver. 12.—**The morning cometh, and also the night.** An oracular reply, but probably meaning (1) that a brighter time would soon dawn upon the Edomite people; and (2) that this brighter time would be followed by a return of misery and affliction. We may (conjecturally) understand the "morning" of the earlier part of Sennacherib's reign, when Edom was at peace with Assyria, merely paying a moderate tribute (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 132), and the "night" of the later period in the same king's reign, when (about B.C. 694—690) the country suffered from another Assyrian invasion, in which the king's treasures and his gods were carried off to Nineveh (ibid., p. 137). **If ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come.** Some take this very literally, as meaning, "If you would inquire further into the meaning of this answer, do so; return to me; come again." But this implies that the Edomites had sent an actual messenger to make the inquiry of ver. 5, which is improbable. Others understand a reproach to Edom: "If ye will have recourse to God in the time of trouble, do so; but then do more—return to him altogether; come, and be one with Judah."

Vers. 13—17.—THE BURDEN OF ARABIA. Edom will have companions in misfortune among the Arab tribes upon her borders, Dedan, Tema, and Kedar. War will enter their territory, derange their commerce (ver. 13), cause flight and privation (vers. 14, 15), and within a year greatly diminish the number of their fighting men (vers. 16, 17). The date of the prophecy is uncertain, but can scarcely be earlier than B.C. 715, when Sargon made an expedition into Arabia (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 66).

Ver. 13.—**The burden upon Arabia**; rather, *in Arabia*. The phrase is varied from its usual form, probably because it is not Arabia generally, but only certain of the more northern tribes, on whom calamity is about to fall. **In the forest . . . shall ye lodge.** The word used is commonly translated "forest;" but Arabia has no forests, and the meaning here must be "brushwood." Thorny bushes and shrubs are common in all parts of Arabia. The general meaning is that the caravans will have to leave the beaten track, and obtain such shelter and concealment as the scanty brushwood of the desert could afford. **Ye travelling companies of Dedanim.** The Dedanim, or Dedanites, were among the chief traders of the Arabian peninsula. They had commercial dealings with Tyre, which they supplied with ivory, ebony, and "precious clothes for chariots" (Ezek. xxvii. 15, 20). This trade they carried on by means of large caravans—the "travelling companies" of the present passage. They are thought to have had their chief settlements on the shores of the Persian Gulf, where the island of Dadan may be an echo of their name.

Ver. 14.—**The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water**; rather, *bring ye water*,

O inhabitants. Tema is reasonably identified with the modern *Taimâ*, a village of the Hauran, on the caravan route between Palmyra and Petra. Its inhabitants are exhorted to bring water to the thirsty Dedanites, as they pass along this route with their "travelling companies." (For other mentions of Tema, which must not be confounded with Teman, see Job vi. 19 and Jer. xxv. 23.) **They prevented with their bread him that fled.** Several commentators take this clause as imperative, like the last, and render, "With his bread meet the fugitive;" but the existing Hebrew text seems to require the rendering of the Authorized Version. Dr. Kay understands the prophet to mean that the men of Tema did not need exhortation; already of their own accord had they given of their bread to the fugitive Dedanites.

Ver. 15.—**For they fled;** rather, *they have fled.* The Dedanites have been attacked with sword and bow, and have fled from their assailants. Probably the enemy was Assyria, but no trace of the war has been found on the Assyrian monuments.

Ver. 16.—**Within a year, according to the years of an hireling** (see the comment on ch. xvi. 14). **All the glory of Kedar shall fail.** "Kedar" is a name of greater note than either Dedan or Tema. It seems to be used here as inclusive of Dedan, perhaps as a designation of the northern Arabians generally. The people of Kedar, like those of Dedan, carried on trade with Tyre (Ezek. xxvii. 21). They dwelt partly in tents (Ps. cxx. 5; Jer. xlix. 29), partly in villages (ch. xlii. 11), and were rich in flocks and herds and in camels. Though not mentioned in the inscriptions of Sargon, Sennacherib, or Esarhaddon, the contemporaries of Isaiah, they hold a prominent place in those of Esarhaddon's son and successor, Asshurbanipal, with whom they carried on a war of some considerable duration in conjunction with the Nabathæans (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' pp. 261—290).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The sadness of a nation's overthrow.* A nation is God's creation, no less than an individual. And it is a far more elaborate work. What forethought, what design, what manifold wisdom, must not have been required for the planning out of each people's national character, for the partitioning out to them of their special gifts and aptitudes, for the apportionment to each of its place in history, for the conduct of each through the many centuries of its existence! It is a sad thing to be witness of a nation's demise. Very deeply does Isaiah feel its sadness. His "loins are filled with pain;" the pangs that take hold of him are "as the pangs of a woman that travaileth;" he is "so agonized that he cannot hear," "so terrified that he cannot look" (ver. 3). "His heart flutters," like a frightened bird; terror overwhelms him; he cannot sleep for thinking of the dread calamity; "the night of his pleasure is turned into fear." The sadness of such a calamity is twofold. It consists (1) in the fact; (2) in the circumstances.

I. THE SADNESS OF THE FACT. We mourn an individual gone from us—how much more a nation! What a blank is created! What arts and industries are not destroyed or checked! What possibilities of future achievement are not cut off! Again, an individual is only removed; he still exists, only in another place. But a nation is annihilated. It has but one life. There is "no healing of its bruise" (Nah. iii. 19), no transference of it to another sphere. From existence it has passed into non-existence, and nothing can recall it into being. It is like a sun extinguished in mid-heaven.

II. THE SADNESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES. The end of a nation comes necessarily by violence, from within or from without—from without most commonly. A fierce host invades its borders, spreads itself over its fertile fields, tramples down its crops, exhausts its granaries, consumes its cattle, burns its towns and villages, carries everywhere ruin and desolation. Wanton injury is added to the injury which war cannot but inflict—fruit-trees are cut down (ch. xvi. 8), works of art are destroyed, good land is purposely "marred with stones" (2 Kings iii. 10). And if inanimate things suffer, much more do animate ones. Beasts of burden are impressed and worked to death; horses receive fearful wounds and scream with pain; cattle perish for want of care; beasts of prey increase as population lessens, and become a terror to the scanty remnant (2 Kings xvii. 25). Not only do armed men fall by thousands in fair fight, but (in barbarous times) the unwarlike mass of the population suffers almost equally. "Every

one that is found is thrust through, and every one that is joined to them is slain by the sword" (ch. xiii. 15). Even women and children are not spared. Virgins and matrons are shamefully used (ch. xiii. 16); children are ruthlessly dashed to the ground (ch. xiii. 16; Ps. cxxxvii. 9); every human passion being allowed free course, the most dreadful excesses are perpetrated. No doubt in modern times civilization and Christianity tend to alleviate in some degree the horrors of war; but in a war of conquest, when the destruction of a nationality is aimed at, frightful scenes are almost sure to occur, sufficient to sadden all but the utterly unfeeling. It should be the earnest determination of every Christian to endeavour in every possible way to keep his own country free from the guilt of such wars.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Half-hearted turning to God of no avail.* There are many who, in the hour of distress, turn to God and his ministers with the question, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" They are anxious to be assured that the dark time of their trouble is well-nigh over, and light about to dawn upon their horizon. And they so far believe in God's ministers as to think that they can, better than others, give them an answer to their question. Accordingly, they importune their clergymen with such inquiries as these: "Will this sickness, or the effect of this accident, or this time of slack work, last long? Is there likely to be much more of it? Or may we look to be free from our trouble speedily?" To such the "watchman" had best answer with some reserve, or even with some obscurity, so far as he gives any direct answer at all to their questions. "The trouble will no doubt pass in time—it may be sooner, it may be later; God only knows the times and the seasons which he has put in his own power." But he may take the opportunity of the inquiry to give a very clear lesson. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come;" that is to say, "Be not half-hearted, beat not about the bush. If ye throw yourselves upon God for one purpose, do so for every purpose; look to him, not for an answer to one inquiry only, but for everything. *Return* to him—*come.*" "The Spirit and the Bride" are always saying, "Come" (Rev. xxii. 17). Christ himself has said, most emphatically, "Come" (Matt. xi. 28). If they "return" and "come," they will be no longer Edom, but Israel; no longer aliens and strangers, but "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 19). Let the cry, then, be sounded in their ears unceasingly, "Return, come."

Ver. 15.—*The grievousness of war.* The grievousness of war is especially felt in defeat. Kedar was the most turbulent of the sons of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 13). "His hand," like that of his father, "was against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. xvi. 12). So long as his "mighty men," armed with their formidable bows, could ravage and plunder the inhabitants of more peaceable districts at their pleasure, and carry off plenty of spoil to their fastnesses in the rocky parts of the desert (ch. xlii. 11), the "grievousness of war" was not felt. Rather, "the inhabitants of the rock sang, and shouted from the top of the mountain" (ch. xlii. 11). But at length the tide of battle had turned. Kedar was itself attacked, invaded, plundered. The "drawn sword" and the "bent bow" of the men of Asshur were seen in the recesses of Arabia itself, and the assailants, becoming the assailed, discovered, apparently to their surprise, that war was a "grievous" thing. Does not history "repeat itself"? Have we not heard in our own day aggressive nations, that have carried the flames of war over half Europe or half Asia, complain bitterly, when their turn to be attacked came, of the "grievousness" of invasion? The Greeks said, "To suffer that which one has done, is strictest, straitest right;" but this is not often distinctly perceived by the sufferers. It is only "God's ways" that are "equal;" man's are apt always to be "unequal" (Ezek. xviii. 25).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Fall of Babylon.* It is thought, by some recent commentators, that the description refers to the siege of Babylon in B.C. 710 by Sargon the Assyrian. The King of Babylon at that time was Merodach-Baladan, who sent letters and a present

to Hezekiah when he was sick (ch. xxxix. 1; 2 Kings xx. 12). The prophet may well grieve over the fall of Babylon, as likely to drag down with it weaker kingdoms.

I. THE SOUND OF THE TEMPEST. What sublime poesy have the prophets found in the tempest! We are perhaps impressed more through the perception of the ear than that of the eye, by the sense of vague, vast, overwhelming power working through all the changes of the world. The sweeping up of a tempest from the southern dry country of Judah is like the gathering of a *moles belli*, and this again betokens that Jehovah of hosts is stirring up his might in the world unseen. Hence his arrows go forth like lightning, his trumpet blows (Zech. ix. 14). This movement comes from the terrible land, the desert, the haunt of serpents and other horrible creatures.

II. THE VISION OF CALAMITY. The march of the barbarous conqueror is marked by cruelty and devastation. The prophet's heart is overpowered within him. He writhes with anguish as in the visions of the even-tide the picture of Babylon's fall passes before his mind. He beholds a scene of rivalry. There is feasting and mirth. We are reminded of that description which De Quincey adduced as an example of the sublime: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast unto a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand" (Dan. v. 1); and of Byron's description of the eve of the battle of Waterloo at Brussels. Suddenly an alarm is given; the walls have been stormed, the palace is threatened; the banqueters must start from the couch and exchange the garb of luxury for the shield and the armour. The impression of the picture is heightened by the descriptions in Herodotus (i. 191) and Xenophon ('Cyrop.,' vii. 5), whether they refer to the same event or no. It is the picture of *careless ease and luxury surprised by sudden terror*. "Let us go against them," says Cyrus in Xenophon. "Many of them are asleep, many intoxicated, and all of them unfit for battle." The scene, then, may be used parabolically to enforce those lessons of temperance, of watchfulness, of sobriety, and prayerfulness which our religion inculcates.

III. THE WATCHMAN. The word of Jehovah directs that a watchman shall be posted, the prophet "dividing himself into two persons"—his own proper person and that of the *speculator* or scout upon the height of the watch-tower. So Habakkuk "stands upon his watch, and sets him upon the tower" (ii. 1). And what does the prophet see? Cavalry riding two abreast, some on horses, others on asses, others (with the baggage) on camels. This he sees; but he hears no authentic tidings of distant things, though straining his ear in utmost tension. Then he groans with the deep tones of the impatient lion. How long is he to remain at his post? We cannot but think of the fine opening of the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus, where the weary warder soliloquizes—

> "The gods I ask deliverance from these labours,
> Watch of a year's length, whereby, slumbering thro' it
> On the Atreidai's roof on elbow, dog-like,
> I know of mighty star-groups the assemblage,
> And those that bring to men winter and summer."
>
> (R. Browning's translation.)

As he waits for "the torch's token and the glow of fire," so does Isaiah wait for certain news about Babylon. And, no sooner is the plaint uttered, than the wish is realized. The watchman sees a squadron of cavalry, riding two abreast, and the truth flashes on him—Babylon is fallen! The images, symbols of the might of the city, protected by the gods they represented, are dashed to the ground and broken. What was felt under such circumstances may be gathered by the student of Greek history from the awful impression made, on the eve of the expedition to Sicily, by the discovery of the mutilation of the statues of the Hermai. It is all over with Babylon.

IV. THE ANGUISH OF THE PATRIOT. "O my threshed and winnowed one!" Poor Israel, who has already suffered so much from the Assyrian, how gladly would the prophet have announced better tidings! The threshing-floor is an image of suffering, and not confined to the Hebrews. It may be found in old Greek lore, and in modern Greek folk-poesy. No image, indeed, can be more expressive (comp. ch. xli. 15; Micah iv. 12, 13; Jer. li. 33). "But love also takes part in the threshing, and restrains the wrath."

V. GENERAL LESSONS. The Christian minister is, too, a watcher. He must *listen* and he must *look*. There are oracles to be heard by the attentive ear, breaking out of the heart of things—hints in the distance to be caught by the wakeful and searching

eye. "They whom God has appointed to watch are neither drowsy nor dim-sighted. The prophet also, by this example, exhorts and stimulates believers to the same kind of attention, that by the help of the lamp of the Word they may obtain a distant view of the power of God."—J.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The watchman.* I. THE CALL FROM SEIR. The Edomites are asking, "Will the light soon dawn? What hour is it?" Like the sick man tossing on his bed, they long for the first tidings that the night of tribulation is past.

II. THE ENIGMATIC ANSWER. "Morning cometh, and also night." There were "wise men" in Edom, and probably the answer is couched in the style they loved. What does it mean? We can but conjecture. It may mean that the coming light of prosperity and joy is soon to be quenched in the night of calamity again. Or, the dawn of joy to some will be the night of despair to others. "When the morning comes, it will still be night" (Luther). Even if morning dawns, it will be swallowed up again immediately by night. And in what follows, also obscure, seems to be a hint that only in case of Edom's conversion can there be an answer of consolation and of hope. The design may be "(1) to reprove them for the manner in which they had asked the question; (2) to assure them that God was willing to direct humble and serious inquiries; (3) to show in what way a favourable answer could be obtained, viz. by repentance."

III. APPLICATION. 1. *Historical.* "History was quite in accord with such an answer. The Assyrian period of judgment was followed by the Chaldean, the Chaldean by the Persian, the Persian by the Grecian, and the Grecian by the Roman. Again and again there was a glimmer of morning dawn for Edom (and what a glimmer in the Herodian age!); but it was swallowed up directly by another night, until Edom became an utter Dumah, and disappeared from the history of nations." Herod the Great, "King of the Jews," was son of Antipater of Edom, who became procurator of Judæa. Under the Mussulman rule in the seventh century A.D., the cities of Edom fell into ruin, and the land became a desolation (comp. Ezek. xxxv. 3, 4, 7, 9, 14). The famed rock-built city of Petra was brought to light in our own time by Burckhardt, 1812. 2. *General.* The prophetic outlook upon the world at any epoch is of the same general character. Night struggles with morning in the conflicts and changes of nations, in the controversies of truth with error. In the closing chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel we do not find a prospect of unmingled brightness, very far from it. Christianity will call into existence vast organized hypocrisies; the shadow attends closely upon the light. At the conversion of the empire under Constantine, at the Reformation, etc., "the morning came, and also night." History pursues a spiral line; old errors return, decayed superstitions revive; then again the day breaks. And so with the individual; the light we gain at happy epochs must yield to fresh doubts or fears, again to be dispelled by redawning faith. Such is the condition of our life; we dwell in the *chiaroscuro*, the twilight of intuition; we "see as in a glass, enigmatically." But hope and endeavour remain to us; and the looking forward to the everlasting light of Jehovah, the glory of God, the rising of the sun that shall no more go down; the end of mourning; the "one day" that shall be neither day nor night; the evening-time when it shall be light (ch. lx. 19, 20; Zech. xiv. 7).—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*The tribes of Arabia.* I. THE FATE OF THE DEDANITES. Their caravans must hide in the thorn-bushes away from the beaten track. These Dedanites belong to Edom (Jer. xlix. 8; Ezek. xxv. 13). They were merchants, and among others traded with wealthy Tyre (Ezek. xxvii. 15). And probably the meaning is that when on their way from Tyre they would be compelled to camp in the desert, because of the widespreading war from north to south.

II. THE SYMPATHY OF THE PROPHET. He calls the people of Tema to supply the thirsty and hungry fugitives with water and with bread. Tema lay on the route between Palmyra and Petra. The tribe was among the descendants of Ishmael. In these sad scenes the light of human kindness in the heart of the prophet, reflected in the picture of Temanite hospitality, shines forth.

"These are the precious balsam-drops
That woeful wars distil."

Hospitality is still found in generous flow among the Arabs of these regions, and reminds the wayfarer how near God is to man in the most desolate places. Wherever there is a loving human heart, there indeed is a fount and an oasis in life's desert. And this scene reminds us how good comes out of evil, even the bitterest; the sight of the flying warriors, showing the bent bow and the wave of war, touches the spring of sympathy and mercy in yonder wild hearts.

III. THE PROPHECY OF DOOM. In a year, "as the years of a hireling," *i.e.* swiftly, certainly, without delay, and without time of grace, Kedar's glory shall be at an end, the powerful tribes of nomad archers will be reduced to a remnant. Those tents, "black but comely," of which the bard of the Canticles sang (i. 5), those splendid flocks, and the famed "rams of Nebaioth," shall disappear, or melt down to a fraction of the former numbers. So again the night sets on Edom, after a brief dawn.

IV. THE WORD OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL. 1. These events were to happen by Divine appointment. 2. The God of Israel is the true God. Let us take the saying to heart, amidst all that is most saddening in the fates of nations and institutions, "God hath done it, God hath said it." The true God who revealed himself to the fathers, and manifested himself to men in Christ, is the Being whose will is made known in the course of history. And amidst his heaviest punishments we have this consolation, that he chastises gently, and does not "give men over to death" (Ps. cxviii. 18).—J.

Ver. 11.—*A momentous question.* "Watchman, what of the night?" This is *the* question which ever occupies earnest minds. That the darkness of sin *is* here wise men note, without wasting metaphysical thought upon the how or why. Here is sin. On that all are agreed. Is there salvation too?

I. PROPHETIC VISION. Isaiah sees. Far away on the world's horizon he beholds a rising light; and, in anticipation of that, he himself is permitted to reveal truths which shall brighten the darkness of Israel. All deliverance is a prophecy of the great Deliverer; all returnings of Israel are foreshadowings of that day when to Christ shall the gathering of the people be.

II. PROPHETIC DECLARATION. "The morning cometh." Always a musical note that. To the sufferer in the chamber of affliction, longing for the first beams of day; to the dismantled ship out far away on the melancholy sea; to the oppressed people waiting for deliverance; to the idolatrous Israel in returning to the true and living God. "The morning cometh." A thought to be meditated on in all long and weary nights of disappointment, disaffection, doubt, and trial. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Patience, poor heart! The morning cometh to the penitent Peter and the doubtful Thomas. "The morning cometh." Not for Israel only, but for the world. The nations that sat in darkness have seen a great light. Isaiah was *right*.

III. PROPHETIC COUNSEL. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye." But do more than that. "Return, come." This is the condition on which the morning glory rests. "Return." Give up your *love* of darkness, and "come." God waits to forgive and bless. "Come." The curiosity of inquiry may belong to mere intellectual states of being. The return of the soul means a great moral change. We must feel the truth of these words, "The morning cometh, and *also the night*." For the morning will be no morning unless the veil of night is taken away from our hearts.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—9.—*The effect of God's judgments on the good and on the guilty.* We gather, preliminarily: 1. That God uses not only elemental forces but human agents for the accomplishment of his righteous purposes. The winds and the waves are his ministers; but sometimes, as here, the whirlwinds he invokes are not the airs of heaven but the passions and agitations of human minds. 2. That the greatest human power is nothing in his mighty hand. Babylon was a "great power" indeed in human estimation at that time, but it needed only the whirlwind of God's holy indignation to sweep it away. Concerning the judgments of the Lord, we mark—

I. THEIR EFFECT ON THE GUILTY. 1. *The suddenness and surprise of their overthrow.* "Prepare the table . . . eat, drink," say they in the palace. But even while they are feasting comes the cry from the watchman on the walls, "Arise, ye princes,

and anoint the shield" (ver. 5). How often, when the ungodly are in the midst of their unjust exactions or their unlawful pleasures, comes the blow which strikes the weapon from their hand, the cup from their lips (see Dan. v. 30; Acts xii. 22, 23; Luke xii. 20)! 2. *The completeness of their downfall.* "Babylon is fallen, *is fallen*" (ver. 9)—fallen utterly, never more to rise; her tyranny broken to pieces, her fires of persecution put out. When God arises to judgment his enemies are not merely defeated, they are *scattered.* 3. *The abasement of their pride.* "Babylon is *fallen.*" The word is suggestive of an inglorious descent from a high seat of assumption and is certainly descriptive of the destruction of the Babylonian power. We know that God wills to humble the haughty, and that nothing is more certain to ensure humiliation than the spirit of pride (Prov. xvi. 18; xvii. 17; ch. x. 33; Luke xiv. 11). 4. *The rebuke of their impiety.* "The graven images he hath broken," etc. As idolatry was visited with the signs of God's wrath, so impiety, covetousness, absorbing worldliness—which *are* idolatry in modern form—must expect to receive the proofs of his displeasure.

II. THEIR EFFECT ON THE GOOD. 1. *Merciful relief from oppression.* "All the sighing thereof have I made to cease." The downfall of the tyrant is the deliverance of the oppressed; hence the close connection between Divine judgments and human praise. As God, in his providence, brings cruelty, injustice, inconsiderateness, to its doom, he makes sighing and sorrow to flee away. There is much tyranny still to be struck down before all burdens will have been taken from the heavy-laden, and before all sighs shall cease from the heavy-hearted. 2. *Conversion from resentment to compassion.* The vision which the prophet saw, albeit it was one of triumph over his enemies, excited his compassion; it was "a grievous vision" (ver. 2). He was even "bowed down at the hearing of it," "dismayed at the seeing of it" (ver. 3). The night which he loved (the night of his pleasure), instead of bringing him the sacred joy of communion with God and prophetic inspiration, brought to him sympathetic pain and distress. Thus was burning patriotic indignation turned into humane compassion. It may be taken, indeed, as an anticipation of that Christian magnanimity which "loves its enemies, and prays for them that despitefully use and persecute" it. When God's judgments on our enemies thus soften our spirits and call forth the kindlier and more generous sentiments, then do they serve an even higher end than when they make our sighs to cease and our songs to sound.—C.

Ver. 10.—*Tribulation.* There is no little tenderness in this Divine address or invocation; it reminds us that God's love may be set upon us when there seems least reason to think so if we judge of his feeling by our outward circumstances. We think naturally of—

I. TRIBULATION. The instrument by which corn was threshed (*tribula*) has given us the word with which we are so familiar. To some it speaks of long-continued sickness, or weakness, or pain; to others of depressing disappointment; to others of bereavement and consequent desolation; to others of loss and the inevitable struggle with poverty; to others of human frailty or even treachery and of the wounded spirit which suffers from that piercing stroke. The heart knows its own bitterness, and every human soul has its own peculiar story to tell, its own especial troubles to endure. But this human suffering is only appropriately called tribulation when it is recognized that the evil which has come is sent (or allowed) of God as Divine chastening, when it is understood that the Divine Father takes a parental interest in the well-being of his children, that he is seeking their highest good, and that he is passing his threshing-instrument over "his floor" in the exercise of a benign and holy discipline.

II. SEPARATION. When the "*tribula*" passed over the reaped corn it separated the valuable grain from the worthless chaff; one was then easily distinguishable from the other. Sorrow, persecution, trial, *tribulation,* is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Before it comes, the genuine and the pretentious may be mingled indistinguishably; after it has come, it is apparent who are the loyal and true disciples, and who are they that have nothing but "the name to live." We cannot be *sure* of "the spirit of our mind" or the real character of others until we, or they, have been upon the threshing-floor, and the Divine instrument of threshing has done its decisive and discriminating work. It comes, like Christ himself, "for judgment;" and then many who were supposed not to see are found to have a true vision of God and

of his truth, while many who have imagined that they saw have been found to be blind indeed (see John ix. 39).

III. SYMPATHY. Israel in Egypt may have thought itself unpitied and even forgotten of God; but it would have been wrong in so thinking (Exod. iii. 7). The Jews in Babylon may have imagined themselves disregarded of Jehovah; but they were mistaken if they so thought. "O my threshing," etc., exclaims the sympathetic voice of the Lord. When we are tempted to bewail our unpitied and forgotten condition, we must check ourselves as the psalmist had to do (Ps. lxxiii.), or we shall be unjust and even ungrateful; "for *whom the Lord loveth* he chasteneth." The mark of tribulation is the sign of parental love and care.

IV. PREPARATION. The process of threshing prepared the corn for the granary, and so for the table, and thus for the fulfilment of its true function. When God stretches us on his floor and makes us undergo the process of tribulation, it is that we may be refined and purified; that we may be made "meet for his use" both on earth and in heaven; that we may be prepared for such higher work and such nobler spheres as we should have remained unfitted for, had he not subjected us to the treatment which is "not joyous but grievous" at the time.—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Taunt, retort, and overture.* 1. We take this to be a bitter taunt on the part of the Idumæan. "Watchman," he says, "what of this long night of national calamity through which you are passing? Where is the God of David, of Josiah, and of Hezekiah? What about those promises of Divine deliverance which have been your trust," etc.? 2. Then we have the calm retort of the prophet. He says, "'The morning cometh.' *You* may see nothing but darkness; but to *me*, on my watch-tower, there are apparent the grey streaks of dawn. I see afar off, but approaching, a glorious deliverance and return — a repopulated city, rebuilt walls, a reopened temple, a rehonoured sabbath, a regenerate and a rejoicing people. 'The morning cometh, and also the night:' to us the morning, to you the night. The sun that shines on you is a setting sun; it is sloping to the west. The dark pall of defeat, captivity, destruction, will soon veil your skies; you have little reason to triumph. We are down, but we are moving up; you are up, but you are moving down." 3. And then comes the prophet's overture. "I do not want," he says, "to gain a barren victory of words. If you will approach me in the spirit, not of mockery, but of inquiry, really wishing to know the mind of God, I will reply to your question. 'If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.'" As the scoffing Idumæan thus assailed the Jewish Church, so the sceptical European assails the Christian Church, and we have—

I. THE TRIUMPHANT TAUNT OF THE SCOFFER. "What," says the scoffer, "of this long night through which the Church is passing? Eighteen centuries have gone since Jesus Christ declared that his cross would attract all men unto him; but barbarism is still found on island and continent, idolatry still prevails among the millions of Asia, corrupt Christianity still deludes the peoples of Europe, and infidelity, immorality, crime, and ungodliness still hang, like angry clouds, over 'Christian England.' What about this long night of Christendom?" Similarly the hostile critic speaks concerning the *individual Christian life.* "What of this long night of protracted sickness, of unsuccessful contest with financial difficulties, of undeserved dishonour, of repeated losses in the family circle by death, etc.?"

II. THE CALM RETORT OF THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE. He says, "'The morning cometh.' Barbarism is steadily disappearing before Christian civilization; superstition is being honeycombed by doubt; unbelief is finding itself unsatisfied with its hollow husks; earnest, practical religion is making its attack, by a hundred agencies, on immorality and irreligion; the Churches of Christ are putting on strength, and there is a sound of victory in the air, there are streaks of morning light in the sky. On the other hand, there are signs that overthrow and utter discomfiture will overtake and overwhelm the unholy doubts of the scoffer. To the oppressed Christian man, even though weeping should endure for the whole night of this mortal life, 'joy cometh in the morning' of the everlasting day."

III. THE OVERTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE. He does not content himself with an effective retort. His mission is not to silence, but to convince and to help. He knows that beneath the sneer is doubt or disbelief, and this is too serious and too

sad a thing to be left unanswered. So he says, "If you will 'inquire,' do inquire. Come into the court of inquiry with a candid, honest spirit; do not delude yourself by holding up one or two modern objections before your eyes and declaring that there is nothing to be seen. Take into account *all* the evidence—of prophecy; of miracle; of the life, character, truth, works, of Jesus Christ; of the effects of his gospel on the world, on human hearts, homes, lives; on man, on woman, on the slave, the poor, the prisoner, etc. Set against this what has to be considered on the other side, and then decide whether this redemption in Jesus Christ is not from heaven. Or, again, if you have any serious doubts as to the efficacy of true piety and its actual worth to a man as he goes through life, *inquire;* but take heed of whom you inquire. Ask of one who has had large and varied experience of life; ask of one who has seen much of men, in whom men have trusted and who knows the thoughts of their hearts; take the testimony of men to whom religion has been not a mere name, or a mere ceremony, but a solid conviction and a living power; and you will find, on such fair inquiry, that it is not only a stay and succour, but is *the mainstay* and the strength of the human soul in the labours and conflicts of life."—C.

Vers. 13—17.—*Our ills and their remedies.* In this "burden" upon Arabia we may detect a picture or, at least, find a suggestion of—

I. THE ILLS TO WHICH FLESH IS HEIR. 1. *Being turned out of our course.* The caravans of Dedan are obliged to forsake their track and find refuge in the forests or stony retreats of the desert (ver. 13). Continually are we compelled to change our route as travellers along the road of life. We mark out our course and set out on our way, but the irresistible obstacle is confronted and we are obliged to deviate into some other track, or wait in hope until the hindrance be removed. 2. *Being straitened for the necessities of life.* The refugees are reduced to such straits that they are glad to receive the bread and water which "the inhabitants of the land of Tema" bring (ver. 14). Though God has made this earth to be large and bountiful enough for a vastly greater population than even now exists upon it, yet, chiefly owing to human folly or iniquity, though sometimes to misfortune, men are reduced to such extreme hardship that the common necessaries are beyond their reach. Between this exigency and the condition of competence, how many degrees of want, and how many thousands of the children of want, are there to be found! 3. *Being assailed and pursued by the enemies of our spirit.* (Ver. 15.) There are adverse powers from *beneath*—the "principalities and powers" of the kingdom of darkness; there are hostile powers that are *around* us—unprincipled and ungodly men, evil practices and harmful institutions in society; but our worst foes are those which are "of our own household," those that are *within* the chambers of our own souls—bad habits, evil propensities, those inclinations toward folly and sin which pursue us even when the main battle has been fought and won. 4. *Finding our life oppressive and burdensome to us.* "According to the years of a hireling" (ver. 16). The time thus counted is reckoned with extreme carefulness; there is no danger that a single day will be left untold. The hireling is impatient for the time to be past that he may lay down the yoke and receive his wage. How many are there to whom life is so much of a burden, who are so oppressed by toil, or weighed down with care, or overwhelmed by sorrow, that they look gladly, if not eagerly, forward to its evening hour, when the night of death will release them from their struggle! 5. *Being distinctly and at length fatally enfeebled.* "The glory of Kedar shall fail," the bowmen and the mighty men "be diminished" (vers. 16, 17). Up to a certain point human life means, not only enjoyment, but increase; from that point it means *diminution*—at first unconscious, but afterwards sensible and painful; at length fatal diminution—in the capacity for enjoyment, in intellectual grasp, in physical endurance, in force of character. The glory of life goes; the faculties of soul and of body are palpably diminished; death draws near. But we may take into our view—

II. DIVINELY PROVIDED REMEDIES. 1. Pursuing the straight path to the goal which is set before us, from which no enemy need make us turn aside. 2. Trusting in the faithful Promiser. 3. Hiding in the pavilion of Divine power, and securing the mighty aid of the Divine Spirit. 4. Seeking and finding the comfort of the Holy Ghost. 5. Awaiting the immortal youth of the heavenly land.—C.

Ver. 2.—*Nations working out God's providences.* The reference of this "burden" is to Babylon, which was the successor to Assyria in executing the Divine judgments on the Jews. Babylonia is called "the desert of the sea," as a poetical figure, suggested by the fact that its surging masses of people were like a sea-desert; or because it was a flat country, and full of lakes, like little seas. It was abundantly watered by the many streams of the river Euphrates. The prophet, writing when Babylon was the rising and triumphing nation, sees in vision her terrible fall and humiliation. Which siege of Babylon he refers to cannot be assured, but much can be said for Cheyne's suggestion, that the depression under which Isaiah writes is best explained by referring the vision to the first siege of Babylon, when Merodach-Baladan was king (B.C. 709), whose interests were in harmony with those of Hezekiah, and whose humiliation Isaiah would regard as injurious to Judah. Watching the movements of these several nations, Assyria, Babylonia, Elam, Media, Judah, we meditate on—

I. RIGHT IDEAS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. We do not speak of providence so freely as our fathers did, because we have less impressive views of the Divine rule and control. As Dr. Bushnell expresses it, "our age is at the point of apogee from all the robuster notions of the Divine Being." We are more interested in the ordinary workings of Law, than in the continuous adjustments and qualifications of Law by the ever-presiding Lawgiver. Yet, if our eyes were opened, we might see manifest signs of what our fathers called "providence" in the personal, the family, and the national spheres of to-day. The proper idea of providence may be thus expressed—it is God using for moral purposes commonplace events, and therefore adjusting, arranging, and fitting together those events. Providence ordering or controlling the nations is "God in history." And the illustrations of Divine overruling which we see in the large spheres of the world-kingdoms, are designed to convince us of the reality of that overruling in the small details of our personal life.

II. THE PROVIDENTIAL DISTINGUISHED FROM THE MIRACULOUS. The distinction is in *our* apprehension; we cannot conceive of the distinction as recognized by *God*. As by the "providential" we mean God intervening to readjust the usual order of material events, it is plain that sometimes he may use forces with which we are familiar, and then we call his working "providential;" but at other times he may use forces with which we are unfamiliar, and then we call his working "miraculous." There need be no difficulty in recognizing resources in God beyond what he has been pleased to explain to man. God has not exhausted himself in making revelations to man. If we could see clearly we should see that "providential" and "miraculous" are convertible terms.

III. THE RELATION OF PROVIDENCE TO MORAL LAW. This may be put into a sentence. It is the executor of its sanctions. The rewards of obedience and the penalties of disobedience are not things deferred until some yet far-distant day. They are continually operating in all spheres, private and public. And what we call "providence" is the agency in their distribution. But our "providence" differs from "fate," or the pagan conception of the "furies," because it is the working of an infinitely wise and good Being, who acts upon comprehensive knowledge and sound judgment.

IV. THE RELATION OF PROVIDENCE TO NATIONS. Here we take one single point. Nations have a corporate life, so they are, as it were, individuals, with a distinct individual character and action. Just as God uses the individual man for his purposes, so he uses the individual nation. For the characteristics of nations, see Greece, Rome, Germany, France, etc. The natural expression of a nation's character or genius becomes the providential agency for carrying out God's purposes. Illustrate the conquering genius of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar doing God's work in the destruction of the kingdom of Judah. The fact that a nation employed as an executor is still in God's control, is shown in God's judging that nation for evils that become manifest in its doing of that executive work. Efficient illustrations may be found in the movements and enterprises of the European nations during the last century.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Sympathy of bodies with distress of mind.* The prophet is only seeing in a vision something that is going to happen by-and-by. But the scene presented to him is so terrible that he cannot exult in it, though it is the overthrow of an enemy's city. He is deeply distressed, and the mental anguish finds its response in acutest bodily

pains. The "loins" are referred to in Scripture as the seat of the sharpest pains (Ezek. xxi. 6; Nah. ii. 10). The most familiar illustration of the sympathy between body and mind is the expression of mental emotion by tears. Ministers and public speakers know, from bitter experience, how nervous excitement stands related to sharp bodily pain and serious bodily depression. The connection may be seen in Job, in Hezekiah, in the Apostle Paul, and in David, who, with vigorous poetical figures describes the bodily distress which accompanied his months of restraining himself, in his hardness and impenitence: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

I. SOUL AND BODY ARE KIN. Our normal condition is the perfect harmony of the two, so that the soul only uses the body for good and right purposes; and the body responds perfectly to all the demands which the soul makes upon it. Combat the idea that the body is evil, or that evil lies in matter, and so our great effort should be to get free of our bodies. The true triumph is to win the use of our body, or, as the Apostle Paul puts it, to get "the body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

II. BODY MAY MASTER SOUL. This is the abnormal condition into which men have passed. They are practically ruled by "sensations" which dominate the will, and so the mass of men are merely animated bodies, in whom the soul is silenced and crushed. Illustrate by the demoniacs in our Lord's time, in whom the *man* was crushed by the *vice*.

III. SOUL SHOULD CONTROL BODY. This is the recovered normal condition and relation; and to energize the soul unto a full and efficient mastery and use of the body is precisely the work of the Divine redemption. The indwelling Spirit of God is a new life for the soul, in the power of which it may overcome the body and the world.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The work of the iconoclast.* "Fallen, fallen is Babylon, and all the images of its gods he hath broken unto the ground." Recent researches have disclosed the fact that there were three sieges of Babylon during the time of Isaiah—in B.C. 709 by Sargon, and in 703 and 691 by Sennacherib. Mr. George Smith, writing of the last of these three sieges, says, "Babylon was now wholly given up to an infuriated soldiery; its walls were thrown down, its temples demolished, its people given up to violence and slavery, the temples rifled, and the images of the gods brought out and broken in pieces." Herodotus is our authority for the supposed aversion of the Medes and Persians to all images. "They not only thought it unlawful to use images, but imputed folly to those who did so." But modern researches do not confirm the statement of Herodotus, and we need see in the destruction of the Babylonian idols no more than the signs of a humiliating and overwhelming conquest. Cyrus has been hitherto regarded as a Persian and monotheist; it is now argued that he was an Elamite and a polytheist. Illustrating the subject, we note—

I. SOME MEN'S LIFE-WORK IS BUILDING UP. They make businesses; they found families; they start theories; they commence organizations; they build churches; they initiate societies. Such men are full of schemes. Moses founds a nation. David organizes a kingdom. Paul establishes a Christian society in the Gentile world. Wesley begins a sect.

II. SOME MEN'S LIFE-WORK IS KEEPING UP. They cannot begin. They are not fertile in resources. Initial difficulties crush them. But quiet perseverance, good faithful work, enables them well to sustain what others have begun.

III. SOME MEN'S LIFE-WORK IS BREAKING DOWN. As was Carlyle's. He broke down society shams, and conceits and hypocrisies of modern thought. So Mahomet broke down corrupt Christianity. The sceptic is an iconoclast; but he breaks down for the pleasure of breaking down. The critic is an iconoclast; but he only attacks the evil. The reformer must often be an iconoclast; but he breaks down only that he may rebuild. Sometimes things reach such a pass that they cannot be reformed, and then "destruction cometh from the Lord," whatever agents he may use; as in the old world, Sodom, captivity of Israel, destruction of Babylon, etc.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*God's people threshed and winnowed.* Isaiah was familiar with the threshing and winnowing processes, and what was in his mind may be presented to

ours. In the East, the threshing-floor is prepared upon some level spot, on high ground. The soil is beaten hard, clay is laid over it and rolled; this soon dries in the heat of the sun, and makes a firm clean floor. Sometimes horses or oxen, tied together and led round in a circle, tread out the corn-grains; but the more general plan is to use a sort of sled made of thick boards, four or five feet in length, with many pieces of flint or iron set firmly in the wood of the under surface. This is drawn over the sheaves, as they are laid on the threshing-floor, by a pair of oxen. The winnowing is done by throwing up the heap with a large shovel, so that the wind may separate the lighter chaff from the heavier grain. The familiar word "tribulation," it will be remembered, is taken from the Latin word *tribulum*, a heavy threshing-roller. The comparison of severe oppression or affliction to threshing is a common one. We may work the figure out by saying—Life is God's floor; his people are the corn laid upon it; dispensations of providence are the sharp threshing-instruments; but their working only proves how anxious God is for the final good of his people; and over their separating and refining he anxiously and lovingly presides. The reference of the text is to Judah, suffering under Babylonian oppression. Isaiah sees the fall of Babylon, and he would gladly have reported that the success of its enemies would prove a permanent relief to Judah; but alas! he only sees more trouble, and heavier trouble still, in store for his country.

I. THRESHING AND WINNOWING ARE ALWAYS TRYING PROCESSES. They crush and cut and bruise; they seem to fling away as we fling away worthless things. And the answering providential dealings of God try faith, try patience, try endurance, try submission. They are trying only because they *must* be. No man would bruise his corn, if it could be separated from its husk in some simpler and easier way. When we think of the work God would do in us—get the corn of goodness quite free from the husk of evil—then the wonder is that, even with such threshing-instruments of trouble, suffering, humiliation, disappointment, as he uses, he yet can accomplish so great a result. Only Divine grace can make such means adequate to such an end. On this dwell further.

II. THRESHING AND WINNOWING ARE PROCESSES HAVING A GRACIOUS END IN VIEW. That end is variously stated. It is "holiness;" it is our "sanctification;" it is knowing how rightly to use these "vessels of our bodies;" it is "likeness to Christ;" it is "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in the light;" it is the "liberty of righteousness." God would have the grain clean, free from all chaff, or dust, or straw; it must be "meet for the Master's use." The ends of Divine threshing are the further ends sought by the Divine redemption. God forms a people for himself; by providential threshings and winnowings, he beautifies them for himself.

III. THE TRYING PROCESS MAY BE BORNE IF WE KEEP THE GRACIOUS END IN VIEW. "No affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Yet does the child of God yield submissively, singing his restful refrain, and saying, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Even in view of further threshing-times, Judah may be quiet; they would but be *God's* threshings, with a view to final good.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The watchman's response.* "Dumah," meaning "silence," is probably a mystical prophetic name for Edom. It seems that Edom was at this time in a condition of humiliation and depression that is well represented by the night-time. As the night passes, Edom calls to Isaiah, as the prophet-watchman, asking how much longer the darkness is to last. Isaiah cannot return a comfortable and satisfying answer; he can only say, "If this night of trouble passes, it will but give place to another." The prophet foresees a short day of prosperity followed by a new night of trouble. "The words sum up the whole future of Edom, subject as it was to one conqueror after another, rising now and then, as under Herod and the Romans, and then sinking to its present desolation."

I. NIGHT-TIMES OF LIFE HAVE THEIR MISSION. They stand, in private life, for the times in which we are put aside from active work, compelled to rest. In national life they stand for the times in which national enterprise is checked by calamities, invasions, plagues, famines, etc. It is found that night has an important and necessary place in the economy of nature. Isaac Taylor has, in a very interesting way, proved that

one or two absolutely dark nights in a year are essential to the well-being of vegetation. Resting-times are important for individual growth, and national calamities are found to bear directly on the conquest of national evils and the culture of national virtues. We may thank God that in our moral life he never gives continuous day, but relieves the overstrain by recurring nights.

II. NIGHT-TIMES OF LIFE HAVE THEIR RELIEFS. There are the moon and stars to shine in them; and they presently give place to the "garish day." Pain is never intense for more than a little while. The light of love and friendship and sympathy relieves the darkness of suffering. National calamities develop national unity and energy, that presently issue in national triumph and stability; as is well illustrated in Prussia's night-time when she was humiliated by Napoleon I. Out of that night-time came German unity, and the recovery of German territory. "Our light affliction, which is *but for a moment*."

III. NIGHT-TIMES OF LIFE HAVE THEIR RETURNS. They are like the tunnels on some of our railways. We are scarcely out of one, and enjoying the open sky, the free air, and the sunshine, before we rush screaming into another. "If there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes." And such returns of trying experiences are so essential for our moral training, that it is the most serious calamity to an individual, or to a nation, that they should be spared them. "Because they have no changes, therefore they forget God." "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent hath not changed." Only of the heavenly and the sinless world may it be said, "There is no night there." These two thoughts may suggest an effective conclusion. No explanations can avail for more than just the piece of life now over us. We cannot know God's meaning for us until the whole of life is before us, and we can fit together the missions of the darkness and the light. Well did our Lord quiet our restless desire to read the mystery of life by saying, "Ye shall know hereafter." And David turned away from the mystery, saying, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." And nobody can ever know the meanings of a life if he fixes attention only on its night-times. They are the shades in the picture, necessary to bring out the picture, but they are not the picture. We must rise to the outlook of God, of whom it is said, "The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The grievousness of war.* "For before the swords have they fled, before the drawn sword, and before the bent bow, and before the pressure of war." The figures imply that the people are conquered, their camp or city taken, and they pursued and cut down by a relentless, blood-thirsty enemy. As this subject is a familiar one, and illustrations lie ready to hand, only divisions need be given. The grievousness of war may be shown—

I. IN THE SACRIFICES IT DEMANDS.

II. IN THE LIVES IT DESTROYS.

III. IN THE TREASURE IT WASTES. The Franco-German War of 1870 cost France £371,000,000, and Germany at least £47,000,000. The American Civil War cost £330,000,000. The Crimean War cost England £167,000,000.

IV. IN THE PASSIONS IT ENGENDERS.

V. IN THE NATIONAL ALIENATIONS IT LEAVES BEHIND.

VI. IN THE SUFFERINGS IT ENTAILS. In the Franco-German War, one hundred and thirty thousand soldiers died on the battle-fields or in the hospitals, and thousands more lost limbs and health. What a wail of sorrow from thousands of homes and hearts such facts bring to our ears!

VII. IN THE RESULTS IT SECURES. Which are usually most insignificant when compared with the expenditure and loss.

Talk of the *glory* of war! The Bible reminds us how much wiser and how much truer it is to talk of its *grievousness*.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The security of the Divine Word.* "They shall . . . for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it." This sentence intimates that God, as the God of Israel, has a

quarrel with Kedar, and at the same time that his power and omniscience will secure the fulfilment of the threatening.

I. THE DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do;" "He knoweth the end from the beginning." God may be pleased to leave man his freedom, and yet he may so know man, and each man, as to see beforehand how each will act in given circumstances; and the Divine plans can be based on such foreknowings and fore-estimatings.

II. THE DIVINE UTTERANCES ARE BASED ON SUCH FOREKNOWLEDGE. God may not be pleased to tell us all he knows, but we may have perfect confidence in what he tells. Revelation is limited, but it is absolutely true within its limitation, because based on complete, adequate knowledge.

III. TIME PROVES THE HARMONY OF THE UTTERANCE AND THE EVENTS. Because the utterance was made in full view of the event. To God the unexpected never happens, and his Word never fails. Men do, in their freedom, just exactly what God, surveying their work, anticipated that they would do. "He will let none of his words fall to the ground."

IV. THE CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S UTTERANCES INVOLVES THE PRACTICAL ORDERING OF OUR CONDUCT. This applies to prophetic anticipations; but how much more to announcements of ever-working principles! There are no exceptions to the great laws of righteousness, which are Jehovah's Word to men. "God has said," is enough for us, and it may shape our lives. It will come to pass, if the "Lord God of Israel hath spoken it."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1—14.—A PROPHECY AGAINST JERUSALEM. The prophet, present in Jerusalem, either actually, or at any rate in spirit, sees the inhabitants crowded together upon the housetops, in a state of boisterous merriment (vers. 1, 2). Outside the walls is a foreign army threatening the town (vers. 5—7). Preparations have been made for resistance, which are described (vers. 8—11); but there has been no turning to God. On the contrary, the danger has but made the bulk of the people reckless. Instead of humbling themselves and putting on sackcloth, and weeping, and appealing to God's mercy, they have determined to drown care in drink and sensual enjoyment (vers. 12, 13). Therefore the prophet is bidden to denounce woe upon them, and threaten that Jehovah will not forgive their recklessness until their death (ver. 14). There is nothing to mark very distinctly the nationality of the foreign army; but it is certainly represented as made up of contingents from many nations. Delitzsch holds that the Assyrian armies were never so made up, or, at any rate, that the nations here mentioned never served in its ranks ('Site of Paradise,' p. 237); but this is, perhaps, assuming that our knowledge on the subject is more complete and exact than is really the case. It is almost impossible to imagine any other army than the Assyrian besieging Jerusalem in Isaiah's time. Moreover, the particulars concerning the preparations made against the enemy (vers. 9—11) agree with those mentioned in 2 Chron. xxxii. 3—5 and 30 as made by Hezekiah against Sennacherib. And the second section of the chapter has certainly reference to this period. It seems, therefore, reasonable to regard the siege intended as that conducted by Sennacherib in his fourth year (B.C. 701), of which we have a brief account in his annals (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135, ll. 15—18).

Ver. 1.—**The burden of the valley of vision.** "The valley of vision" is only mentioned here and in ver. 5. It must have been one of the deep depressions near Jerusalem from which there is a good view of the town. The LXX. render, "the burden of the valley of *Zion*." **What aileth thee now?** Jerusalem is addressed by the prophet, who assumes the *rôle* of a spectator, surprised at what he sees, and asks an explanation. **That thou art wholly gone up to the housetops.** Partly, no doubt, they went to watch the enemy and his movements, as Rosenmüller says; but still more for feasting and revelry (Judg. xvi. 27; Neh. viii. 16). The flat roofs of Oriental houses are often used as places of recreation and entertainment, especially in

the evening (Shaw, 'Travels,' p. 211; Chardin, 'Voyages en Perse,' vol. iv. p. 116; Layard, 'Nineveh,' vol. i. p. 177, etc.).

Ver. 2.—**A joyous city** (comp. ver. 13). **Thy slain men are not slain with the sword.** It is a blockade rather than a siege. Men die, not of wounds, but of privations (Lam. iv. 9). Sennacherib himself says, "Hezekiah, like a caged bird, within Jerusalem, his royal city, I confined; towers round about him I raised; and the exit of the great gate of his city I shut" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135, ll. 15—18).

Ver. 3.—**All thy rulers are fled together;** rather, *all thy chief men.* We must make allowance for Oriental hyperbole. The meaning is that numbers of the principal men, regarding resistance as vain, had endeavoured to make their escape from the doomed town, but had been captured and bound by the enemies' archers. **All that are found in thee;** rather, *belonging to thee.* The reference is to those who had made their escape and were fleeing far away. The archers seize them, and bind them *all together.* We often see a number of captives bound together by a single rope in the Egyptian bas-reliefs. Which **have fled from far;** rather, *which were flying far away.*

Ver. 4.—**Therefore said I.** The prophet turns from the description of the scene before him to an account of his own feelings. **Look away from me, he says;** "leave me free to vent my sorrow without restraint; I wish for no consolation—only leave me to myself." **Because of the spoiling.** The word used sometimes means "destruction;" but "spoiling" is a better rendering here. Sennacherib describes his "spoiling" of Jerusalem on this occasion as follows: "Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious carbuncles, great . . . stones, couches of ivory, lofty thrones of ivory, skins of buffaloes, horns of buffaloes, weapons, everything, a great treasure, and his daughters, the eunuchs of his palace, male musicians, and female musicians, to Nineveh, the city of my dominion, did Hezekiah send after me" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135, ll. 29—37). To what straits Hezekiah was reduced in order to collect a sufficient amount of the precious metals we learn from 2 Kings xviii. 15, 16.

Ver. 5.—**It is a day . . . by the Lord;** rather, *there is a day to the Lord;* or, *the Lord has a day.* God has in reserve such a day; and it will assuredly arrive in due course. Hence the prophet's grief. **In the valley of vision.** We may suppose that Hezekiah, before he made the submission recorded in 2 Kings xviii. 14 and in the 'Cylinder of Sennacherib,' col. iv. ll. 28, 29, tried the chances of battle against the Assyrians *in this valley,* and that Isaiah had a prophetic vision of the fight. **Breaking down the walls;** rather, *undermining.* The Assyrian sculptures show numerous examples of this practice. Sometimes swords or spears are used to dislodge the stones of the wall, sometimes crow-bars or axes (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 82). **Crying.** Some regard this word, and also that translated "the walls" in the preceding clause, as proper names, and render the passage, "Kir undermineth, and Shoa is at the mount" (Ewald, Cheyne, Luzzatto). But it seems unlikely that "Kir" would be mentioned twice.

Ver. 6.—**Elam bare the quiver.** Elam, the country extending from the Zagros range to the Lower Tigris, and watered by the Choaspes, Eulæus, Pasitigris, and other rivers, was an independent kingdom from a very early date (Gen. xiv. 1, 9), and in Isaiah's time was generally hostile to Assyria. Sargon, however, relates that he conquered a portion of the country, planted colonies in it from the more western parts of his empire, and placed both colonists and natives under the governor of Babylon ('Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 16). It is thus quite possible that both Sargon and Sennacherib may have had a contingent of Elamites in their armies. **With chariots of men and horsemen;** rather, *with troops of men (who were) horsemen* (comp. ch. xxi. 7). **Kir uncovered the shield.** "Kir" is mentioned in 2 Kings as the place to which Tiglath-Pileser transported the inhabitants of Damascus (xvi. 9), and by Amos (ix. 7) as the original country from which the Syrians were derived. It has been recently identified with Kirkhi, near Diarbekr, or with Kirruri, in the Urumiyah country (Cheyne); but neither identification is more than possible. (On uncovering shields as a preliminary to engaging in battle, see Cæsar, 'De Bell. Gall.,' ii. 21.)

Ver. 7.—**And it shall come to pass,** etc. This verse and the next are closely connected, and introduce the new subject of the preparations which the Jews made for their defence. Translate, *And it came to pass, when thy choicest valleys were full of chariots* (or, *troops*), *and the horsemen had set themselves in array toward the gate, that then did he draw off the covering of Judah,* etc.

Ver. 8.—**The covering of Judah** was that which hid their weakness either from themselves or from the enemy—probably the former. God drew this aside, and they suddenly saw their danger, and began to think how they could best defend themselves. Arms were the first things needed. **The armour of the house of the forest.** "The house of the forest" was probably that portion of the palace of Solomon which he had called "the house of the forest of Lebanon"

(1 Kings vii. 2—5). This was, it would seem, used as an armoury (1 Kings x. 17; xiv. 27; ch. xxxix. 2).

Ver. 9.—**Ye have seen also . . . are many**; rather, *ye saw also . . . were many*. **The breaches of the city of David.** "The city of David" may be here a name for Jerusalem generally, as "the city where David dwelt" (ch. xxix. 1), or it may designate the eastern hill, where David fixed his residence (2 Sam. v. 7; Neh. iii. 15, 16, 25; xii. 37). In 2 Chron. xxxii. 5 we read that Hezekiah at this time "built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo *in the city of David*," where a particular part of Jerusalem seems certainly to be meant. **Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.** The arrangements made by Hezekiah with respect to the water-supply at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, seem to have been the following: He found on the north of the city, where the Assyrian attack was certain to be delivered, in the vicinity of the Damascus gate, a pool or reservoir (ch. vii. 3), fed by a conduit from some natural source, which lay open and patent to view. The superfluous water ran off from it by a "brook" (2 Chron. xxxii. 4), which passed down the Tyropœon valley, and joined the Kedron to the south-east of Ophel. His first step was to cover over and conceal the open reservoir, and also the "brook" which ran from it, at least as far as the northern city wall, to prevent their use by the Assyrians. He then further made a conduit underground (2 Chron. xxxii. 30) within the city, along the Tyropœon depression, to a second reservoir, or "pool," also within the city, which could be freely used by the inhabitants (see ver. 11; and comp. Ecclus. xlviii. 17). Further, it is probable that he carried a conduit from this second pool, under the temple area, to the "fount of the Virgin" on the eastern side of Ophel, and thence further conveyed the water by a tunnel through Ophel to the "pool of Siloam." (This last may be the work here alluded to.) The inscription recently discovered at this pool is probably of Hezekiah's time (see 'Quarterly Statement' of Palest. Expl. Fund for April, 1881, p. 70).

Ver. 10.—**Ye have numbered . . . have broken down**; rather, *ye numbered . . . ye broke down*. The "numbering" was probably in order to see how many could be spared for pulling down. The repair of the walls with materials thus furnished was a sign of extreme haste and urgency. It would seem from vers. 7, 8 that the repairs were not begun until the town was invested.

Ver. 11.—**Ye made also a ditch**; rather, *a lake*, or *reservoir* (see the comment on ver. 9). **But ye have not looked unto the maker thereof**; *i.e.* you have not looked to God, who in his eternal counsels foreknew and decreed all the steps that you are taking for your defence (see below, ch. xxxvii. 26).

Ver. 12.—**In that day.** The day alluded to in ver. 7, when the choice valleys in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem were first seen to be full of a hostile soldiery, and the Assyrian horsemen were observed drawing themselves up opposite the gates. Such a sight constituted an earnest call upon the people for immediate repentance. **Baldness** (comp. ch. xv. 2; Micah i. 16; Amos viii. 10). It has been said that "baldness" was forbidden by the Law (Cheyne); but this is not so, absolutely. Baldness was wholly forbidden to the priests (Lev. xxi. 5; comp. Ezek. xliv. 20); and certain peculiar modes of shaving the hair, the beard, and the eyebrows, practised by idolatrous nations, were prohibited to all the people (Lev. xix. 27; Deut. xiv. 2). But such shaving of the head as was practised by Job (Job i. 20) and other pious men, was not forbidden to laymen, any more than the wearing of sackcloth. It was regarded as a natural mode of exhibiting grief.

Ver. 13.—**And behold joy and gladness** (comp. ver. 2). "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," is a common sentiment, if not a common expression. It has been supposed to have given rise to the Egyptian practice of carrying round the model of a mummy to the guests at feasts. According to the Greeks, Sardanapalus had a phrase very like it engraved upon his tomb ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 500). Sailors have often acted upon it, when they found it impossible to save their ship. On seeing their city invested, a portion of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, despairing of safety, did as sailors have done so frequently.

Ver. 14.—**It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts**; rather, *the Lord of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, saying*. **This iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die.** The sin of turning a call to repentance into an excuse for rioting and drunkenness is one which God will not pardon. It implies a hardness of heart which cannot fail to issue in final impenitence.

Vers. 15—24.—PROPHECY ON THE DEPOSITION OF SHEBNA AND THE ELEVATION OF ELIAKIM. In its first and simplest application, this section predicts the fall of one state official and the advancement of another—matters, no doubt, of some importance in the court history of the time, but scarcely (with reverence be it said) of such moment as to be worthy either of prophetic announcement or of divinely inspired record. It has, therefore, been generally felt that there must be a secondary application

of the passage. According to some, the two officials represent respectively the two covenants, the old and the new; according to others, they stand for the two great parties in the Jewish state of the time—that which put its trust in Jehovah, and that which leant upon heathen alliances.

Ver. 15.—The Lord God of hosts. This form, *Adonay Jehovah Tsabaôth*—rarely used by Isaiah, but occurring above in vers. 5, 12, and 13—seems to show that this section is in its right place, being intended as a sequel to the description of Sennacherib's siege. **This treasurer.** The word "this" is contemptuous. That translated "treasurer" is of doubtful import. The key to it is probably to be found in the cognate noun, translated "storehouse" in 2 Chron. xxxii. 28, and "store" in 1 Kings ix. 19; 2 Chron. viii. 4, 6; xvi. 4; xvii. 12. Translate, *this storekeeper*. **Shebna** (see below, ch. xxxvi. 2, 11, 22; xxxvii. 2; and comp. 2 Kings xviii. 18, etc.). The name, which is not found elsewhere, is thought to be Syriac rather than Hebrew, and Shebna himself is conjectured to have been a foreign adventurer, perhaps "a refugee from Damascus" (Cheyne). (See the next verse.) **Which is over the house.** An office like the imperial *præfectus palatio*" at Rome, or the Frankish "mayor of the palace" (see Gen. xli. 40; 1 Kings iv. 6; xviii. 3). At this time it seems to have been the highest office that a subject could hold (2 Chron. xxvi. 21; 2 Kings xviii. 18, etc.).

Ver. 16.—**What hast thou here?** *i.e.* what *business*, or what *right*? It seems, certainly, to be implied that Shebna was wholly unconnected with Jerusalem. **Whom hast thou here?** *i.e.* what relations? what family? To be justified in hewing out a large tomb, Shebna should have had a numerous family for whom graves would be needed. Otherwise, his excavation of a grand sepulchre was merely selfish and ostentatious. **As he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high.** Jewish tombs of any pretension were generally excavations in the solid rock, on the side of some hill or mountain, and had often a very elevated position. Tombs exist on the slopes of all the hills about Jerusalem, but are most numerous on the eastern side of the temple mount, which slopes steeply to the Kedron valley. A square-topped doorway leads into a chamber, generally square, from which recesses, six or seven feet long, two broad, and three high, are carried into the rock horizontally, either on a level with the floor, or with a platform, or shelf, halfway up one of the walls. These recesses have been called *loculi*. After a body had been placed in one, it was commonly closed by a stone, which fitted into the end, and thus shut off the body from the chamber. Chambers had sometimes twelve such *loculi*. **An habitation** (comp. Eccles. xii. 5). We must not suppose, however, that the Jews, like the Egyptians and Etruscans, regarded the soul as inhabiting the tomb. The soul descended into *sheôl*; the grave was the "habitation" of the body only.

Ver. 17.—**The Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity**; rather, *the Lord will hurl thee away, O man, with a hurling*; i.e. "will hurl thee away to a distance." It is not *said* that Shebna would be a captive. **Will surely cover thee**; literally, *will cover thee with a covering*; i.e. "will make thee obscure" (Rosenmüller)—a fitting punishment for one who aimed at attracting attention and making himself famous (ver. 16).

Ver. 18.—He will surely violently turn and toss thee, etc.; literally, *rolling he will roll thee with rolling like a ball*, etc. **Into a large country.** Assyria, or perhaps Egypt. If Shebna was disgraced on account of his recommending the Egyptian alliance, he may not improbably have taken refuge with Tirhakah. **There the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house**; rather, *there shall be the chariots of thy glory, O thou shame of thy lord's house*. His chariots, in which he gloried, should accompany him, either as spoil taken by the enemy, or as the instruments of his flight.

Ver. 19.—**I will drive thee from thy station**; rather, *from thy post*, or *office* (comp. 1 Chron. xxiii. 28). **Shall he pull thee down.** Jehovah seems to be meant in both clauses (comp. ch. xxxiv. 16). The full accomplishment of this prophecy is nowhere declared to us. We merely find that, by the time of Rabshakeh's arrival at Jerusalem as Sennacherib's envoy (ch. xxxvi. 2—4), Shebna had lost his post as prefect of the palace, and filled the lower position of scribe or secretary. He may, however, have been subsequently further degraded, and thereupon he may have fled to Egypt, as Jeroboam did (1 Kings xi. 40).

Ver. 20.—**In that day.** In the day of Shebna's deposition from his office of prefect of the palace. **My servant Eliakim.** On the dignity of this title, when given by God himself, see the comment on ch. xx. 3.

Ver. 21.—**With thy robe . . . with thy girdle.** The dress of office worn by Shebna would be taken from him, and Eliakim would be invested therewith. The "robe" is the long-sleeved cloak or tunic worn commonly by persons of rank; the "girdle" is probably an ornamental one, like those of the priests (Exod. xxviii. 39), worn over the inner tunic. **He shall be a father**; *i.e.* a protector, counsellor, guide (comp. Job xxix. 16, "I was *a father to the poor*: and the cause which I knew not I searched out"). It

is, perhaps, implied that Shebna had not conducted himself as a "father."

Ver. 22.—**The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.** A key would seem to have been the special badge of the prefect's office, which included the control of the stores (ver. 15), and the general management of the household. It was, perhaps, a part of the form of investiture, that the key should be first laid on the prefect's shoulder and then delivered into his hand. Among the Greeks the priests of Ceres are said to have borne a key on their shoulder, permanently, as a badge of office (Callimach., 'Hymn. ad Cererem,' l. 45). The reference to this passage in Rev. iii. 7 is sufficient to show that Eliakim, the "*servant* of Jehovah" (ver. 20), is, to a certain extent, a type of Christ; perhaps also of his faithful ministers (Matt. xvi. 19; John xx. 23).

Ver. 23.—**I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place** (comp. Ezra ix. 8; Zech. x. 4). The idea intended to be expressed is firmness and fixity of tenure. **He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house** (compare the next verse). All his relations, even the most remote, shall derive honour from him, and bask in the sunshine of his prosperity. So shall all members of the family of God, made sons of God by adoption in Christ, participate in the final glory of Christ in his eternal kingdom.

Ver. 24.—**All the glory.** According to scriptural notions, the "glory" of a family consists very much in its size (Gen. xv. 5; Ps. cxxvii. 5, etc.). And Christ's glory in his final kingdom will consist greatly in the number of the saved (Rev. vii. 4—9). **The offspring and the issue**; *i.e.* the flourishing scions, and the despised seedlings alike. The word translated "issue" is a term of contempt (see Ezek. iv. 15). **From the vessels of cups**; rather, *of bowls* (comp. Exod. xxiv. 6). **To all the vessels of flagons**; rather, *of pitchers*. "A numerous, undistinguished, family connection" seems to be intended (Delitzsch).

Ver. 25.—SEQUEL OF THE PROPHECY CONCERNING ELIAKIM. This verse has been truly called "an enigma" (Kay). It is impossible to understand it of Shebna. "*The* nail that was fastened in a sure place" can only refer to the nail said to have been so fastened in ver. 23. Are we, then, to understand that Eliakim too will experience a reverse of fortune? But then all the force of the contrast between him and Shebna would be gone. Is it not possible that the prophet, seeing in Eliakim a type of the Messiah, and becoming more and more Messianic in his utterances, has ended by forgetting the type altogether, and being absorbed in the thought of the antitype? He, the nail, so surely fixed in his eternal place, would nevertheless be "removed" for a time, and then "be cut down and fall" (comp. ch. lii. 14; liii. 8). At the same time would be "cut off" the burden which Messiah bore (ch. liii. 12, "He bare the sin of many").

Ver. 25.—**In that day.** Not the day of Shebna's fall, certainly (ver. 20), but some other. Is not the day that of Christ's earthly mission, when it seemed as if his people were about to acknowledge him (Matt. xxi. 1—11; Mark xi. 1—10; Luke xix. 29—40), and his throne to be established, but suddenly Messiah was "cut off" (Dan. ix. 26)—stricken for the transgression of his people (ch. liii. 8)? **The burden that was upon it shall be cut off.** The great burden upon the Messiah was the load of human sin which he had to bear. "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24). By his death this burden was "cut off" (1 John ii. 2; 2 Cor. v. 19; Eph. ii. 16; Col. ii. 14). **For the Lord hath spoken it.** The double attestation, at the beginning and at the end of the verse, is a mark of the vast importance of the announcement contained in it, which is, in fact, the germ of the great doctrine of the atonement.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 4—6.—*Isaiah weeping for the daughter of his people a type of Christ lamenting over Jerusalem.* Isaiah was in many respects a type of Christ. His name, which signifies "Salvation of Jehovah," is a near equivalent of "Jesus," which means "Jehovah is Saviour." Tradition says that he was of royal lineage, like Jesus. The sphere of his teaching was in the main Jerusalem, where our Lord's principal discourses were delivered. He reproved sin, yet pitied the sinner, like Jesus (see Homiletics on ch. xv. 5). He was, like Jesus, martyred at Jerusalem. We may, therefore, without impropriety, regard the "bitter weeping" of ver. 4 as in some respect the counterpart of our Lord's lament on the day of his triumphal entry into the city, when he beheld it from the brow of Olivet. They were alike in several respects.

I. BOTH WERE CAUSED BY PROPHETIC VISION OF THE HORRORS OF A SIEGE. In Isaiah's

time the siege had begun. The enemy was investing the place (ver. 7). But his tears flowed on account of the future "spoiling" of his people on that "day of trouble and treading down and perplexity;" when there was to be "breaking down of walls and crying to the mountains" (ver. 5), and Elam was to "bear the quiver," and Kir to "uncover the shield." Jesus wept because the days were coming upon Jerusalem, when "her enemies would cast a trench about her, and compass her round, and keep her in on every side," and at last "lay her even with the ground, and her children within her" (Luke xix. 43, 44). In the one case Rome was the enemy, in the other Assyria, both equally truculent. In the one case final destruction impended; in the other a punishment far short of final destruction, but still a very severe punishment. In both cases grievous sins had provoked the catastrophe, yet the thought of these did not prevent the tears from being shed on account of it.

II. BOTH DERIVED THEIR BITTERNESS FROM THE FACT THAT THE SUFFERER WAS OF KIN TO THE MOURNER. "I will weep," said Isaiah, "because of the spoiling of the daughter of *my people*." The woes of other peoples shocked and distressed him to some extent (ch. xv. 5; xvi. 9—11; xxi. 3, 4); but not as those of his own nation, his "kinsmen according to the flesh." And so it was with Jesus. Patriotism moved the spirits of both mourners, and rendered their grief especially poignant.

III. BOTH WERE AGGRAVATED BY THE THOUGHT THAT THE SUFFERING WAS UNEXPECTED. Isaiah tells us that at Sennacherib's siege no preparations had been made to resist the foe, until the choice valleys were full of troops, and the horsemen set in array at the gates (vers. 7—10). Our Lord gives it as the climax of the horrors at the siege by Titus, that Jerusalem had not "known the day of her visitation" (Luke xix. 44). Jerusalem was at the time expecting the Messiah, who would enable them to cast off the Roman yoke. She did not know that her Messiah had come. Just when she was looking for a glorious deliverance, there came a crushing disaster. So Hezekiah was probably looking for victory by the help of Egypt, when he had to make the most abject submission—to strip the temple in order to satisfy the cravings of the conqueror for "spoil," and to see a large part of his people carried into captivity (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 134).

Vers. 15—24.—*Shebna and Eliakim: a moral lesson.* It is a remark of Bishop Butler's, that the moral government of God, though it may be very imperfectly carried out, is at any rate begun, in this world. Many virtues have natural rewards, and many vices natural punishments, attached to them. Again, though undoubtedly the righteous do suffer a large share of affliction, and the ungodly are often seen in great prosperity, yet, on the other hand, very signal instances from time to time manifest themselves, of the punishment of the wicked in this life by a grievous downfall, and the reward of the righteous by an exaltation to worldly greatness and honour. The most signal instance presented to us in Scripture of the double Nemesis is that of Haman and Mordecai in the Book of Esther. In that most striking tale, the whole history of the two men is set before us, and the rise of the one and fall of the other are interconnected in a way that lends peculiar interest to the narrative. Here we have simply a moral contrast, leading to a contrast of result.

I. A MORAL CONTRAST. 1. Shebna, selfish, isolated, vain-glorious; noted for his display of chariots, like Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 1); no "father" to the people under his charge; no good adviser of the king his master; chiefly desirous of handing his name down to posterity by a magnificent tomb; perhaps not even a worshipper of Jehovah. 2. Eliakim, God's "servant;" kind and thoughtful for others; regarded as "a father," not only by the people of Jerusalem, but by the entire "house" or tribe of Judah; looked up to by a large body of relations, of whom many were poor and of low rank, and willingly sharing his prosperity with them; an honest and prudent counsellor to his king; a faithful worshipper of the One God, whose unity his name proclaimed. No two dwellers at the same court, no two servants of the same king, could well be more different in character, in circumstances, in moral desert.

II. A CONTRAST OF RESULT. 1. Shebna, degraded from his office, is forced for a time to serve in one of very inferior dignity. Then he is either further degraded or so dissatisfied with his position that he cannot bear to retain it. He becomes a refugee in a distant land, an exile, an outcast. 2. Eliakim, advanced into Shebna's place, has the

key of the house of David placed upon his shoulder, becomes his king's most trusty counsellor and representative, is a glory and a support to his father's house, and retains his position, if not till his death, at any rate for a long period.

In estimating the extent to which God's moral government is carried on in this world, such instances as those of Haman and Mordecai, Shebna and Eliakim, should by no means be omitted from our calculation. History contains very many such cases.

Vers. 15—24.—*Shebna and Eliakim: an allegory.* Shebna, set over the house of the king by the king himself, but unfaithful in his office, worldly, carnal, fond of grandeur and display, typifies the old covenant, and the priesthood to which it was committed—a priesthood which looked more to the enrichment of the treasury than to the pure service of God (Mark vii. 11), and which was not above the weakness of raising up grand sepulchres for its members in a conspicuous place (1 Macc. xiii. 27—30). This priesthood, found wanting, had to be cast away, and a better priesthood, after a different order, to be instituted. Eliakim typifies this new priesthood—a priesthood "made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb. vii. 16). Primarily, he typifies Christ himself, the true "Servant of the Lord" (ch. xlii. 1—4; xliii. 10; xlix. 3, 6; lii. 13, etc.), the perpetual High Priest of his Church, the eternal Possessor of "the key of David, who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (Rev. iii. 7), who "hath the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 18). Eliakim was "a father" to Judah and Jerusalem; among Christ's names is that of "Everlasting Father" (ch. ix. 6). Eliakim was "as a nail fastened in a sure place;" Christ is gone up where he "for ever sitteth on the right hand of God" (Heb. x. 12). Eliakim had a "glorious throne;" Christ's throne is that "great white" one, which is set in heaven (Rev. xx. 11), out of which "come lightnings, and thunderings, and voices" (Rev. iv. 5). On Eliakim hung all the members of his father's house; on Christ depends, for pardon, for peace, for life, for glory, every true Christian. Secondarily, Eliakim may be regarded as typifying the faithful minister of Christ, to whom the power of the keys is communicated in a certain modified sense (Matt. xvi. 19), who, binding and loosing according to Christ's ordinance, binds and looses effectively, so that none can undo his work, and, as a faithful steward in the household of Christ, dispenses the good things committed to his charge by his King and Master. The faithful minister will not blench before the powers of evil, any more than Eliakim did before Rabshakeh (ch. xxxvi. 11, 21); he will be "a father" to the people of God, *i.e.* a protector, a guide, a friend; and with those who "hang upon him" he will always be ready to share both his material and his spiritual blessings.

Ver. 25.—*Messiah's burden and Messiah's death.* How Christ's death atones for sin we know not, and need not too curiously inquire. But, if plain words have a plain meaning, it is impossible to doubt that this is the teaching of Scripture. "By his stripes we are healed" (ch. liii. 5); "He is the Propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2); "One died for all" (2 Cor. v. 14). It is quite possible that there is something in the nature of things, which we cannot fathom, that made it impossible for man's sins to be forgiven unless God died for them. Our wisdom is to avoid curious speculation, and to view the matter on its practical side. Thus viewed, it manifestly calls on us for three things.

I. INTENSE HATRED OF SIN, ON ACCOUNT OF ITS HAVING CAUSED MESSIAH'S DEATH. If an animate, or even an inanimate, thing has caused the death of one we loved, how bitterly we detest it! Often we cannot bear to look upon it, nay, even to see a thing of the same kind. How, then, should we hate sin—hateful in itself, hateful in its effects, hateful in its origin, most hateful in that it caused the death of the one Man who alone of all that have ever lived did not deserve to die! And he, moreover, One who dearly loved us, who came down from heaven for us, lived a life of privation and suffering for us, at last died for our sakes.

II. INTENSE LOVE OF CHRIST, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS HAVING DIED FOR US. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But Christ died for his enemies. Sin is an insuperable barrier between God and man, sets them at variance, makes them adversaries. And till Christ died man could not be forgiven.

So he died for those with whom he was at enmity! And died by what a death! 1. More painful probably than any other. 2. Considered at the time more disgraceful. 3. Aggravated by the insults of lookers-on. 4. Regarded as bringing a man under a curse.

III. INTENSE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS GIVING HIS SON TO DIE FOR US. We cannot realize the love of the Father for the Son; but we cannot doubt that it transcends any love known on earth. Yet *he gave him* to suffer all that he suffered—and why? For us. Because he loved us. As our Lord himself says, "God *so loved* the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). If the knowledge of this fact fail to stir up love towards the Father in our souls, we must be "past feeling" (Eph. iv. 19), utterly dead to any high motive, scarcely better than "brute beasts" (Jude 10).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*Judgment upon Jerusalem.* I. THE PROPHET AS SPECTATOR. The valley of vision seems to mean Jerusalem as a whole, round about which are mountains (Ps. cxxv. 2); the city is spoken of, when compared with the surrounding mountains, as the "inhabitant of the valley," otherwise as the "rock of the plain" (Jer. xxi. 13; comp. xvii. 3). If Isaiah is gazing from his house in the lower town, the city would appear as in a valley in relation to the mountains inside as much as those outside (Delitzsch). He sees the whole population crowded together on the house-tops, and the air is filled with the uproar of merriment. The house-tops were places of resort at festival-time (Judg. xvi. 27; Neh. viii. 16).

II. THE MIRTH OF DESPAIR. It was famine and pestilence which, forcing the people into despair, had brought about this mad rebound of hollow merriment. The slain of the city had not been slain upon the field; but the crowding in of fugitives from the country had occasioned the plague. The description reminds us of Zephaniah's picture of Nineveh: "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me" (ii. 15). And again we think of scenes in connection with the plagues in the Italian cities of the Middle Ages, when revelry and story-telling are said to have gone on amongst groups who had withdrawn themselves from the horrors around them. How terrible the contrast between the dark background of calamity and this hollow feverish exhibition of merriment in the foreground! "I said of laughter, What is it?" Let us thank God for the precious gift of humour. Its light, lambently playing upon the sternest and most awful scenes and imagery of the mind, was given to relieve the tragedy of life. In melancholy minds the source of humour is deeply seated. But how different the cheerfulness which springs from the sense that the scheme of things is sound and right, that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world," and that which confronts a hopeless future with mad defiance! There is something lurid, ominous, in the latter, full of foreboding; and the scene in Jerusalem may be dwelt upon as typical of the ill-timed mirth of the sinner when danger is impending, soon to be quenched in silence and night. The rulers have fled away from the devoted city; in the face of the enemy they have flung down their bows and yielded themselves prisoners. All is lost.

III. THE FORECAST OF DOOM. 1. *The grief of the prophet.* In warm patriotism he identifies himself with his city and his people, and gives way to bitter tears; a prototype of Jesus in later days, looking on the doomed city, perhaps, from some similar point of view. We are reminded also of Jeremiah, whose heart "fainted" under a similar sense of the miseries of the people, and who exclaims, "Oh that my head were full of waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail the slain of my people!" (iv. 31; ix. 1). These are living examples of compassion, and of true patriotic feeling, including a true Church feeling. "We are altogether unworthy of being reckoned in the number of the children of God, and added to the holy Church, if we do not dedicate ourselves and all that we have to the Church in such a manner that we are not separate from it in any respect. Especially the ministers of the Word ought to be moved by this feeling of grief, because, being appointed to keep watch and to look

at a distance, they ought also to groan when they perceive the tokens of approaching ruin" (Calvin). 2. *The siege and capture.* "We seem to see and hear the last hurrying stages of the siege and capture" (Cheyne). In one of the valleys the hosts of the enemy are seen thickly trampling and spreading dismay and confusion all around. As the undermining of the walls by the siege artillery goes on, cries of woe beat against the surrounding hills, and are echoed back again. The terrible famed bowmen of Elam (comp. Jer. xlix. 35) and the people of Kir, together forming, as it would seem, the vanguard of Assyria, are seen advancing. The valleys about the city, all teeming with associations of the past—Kedron, Gihon, Rephaim, Hinnom—are ploughed by hoofs of horses and wheels of chariots; and the foe is drawn up in column, ready to enter the "great gate," so soon as it shall be broken down by the battering-rams. 3. *The state of the inhabitants.* Jehovah draws aside the curtain from Judah. This may mean (1) he exposes their weakness to the enemy; or (2) he takes away the blindness of the people to their danger. Probably the former. In either case the hand of an overruling Providence is recognized. The "forest house," or arsenal built by Solomon on Zion, is examined (1 Kings vii. 2; x. 17; cf. ch. xxxix. 2). The "city of David," *i.e.* the fortress on Mount Zion, is inspected by the leading men, and the numerous breaches in the walls are observed. They survey the houses, and take material from them to repair the wall. They concentrate the water-supply in one reservoir—the "lower pool," and form a basin between the two walls. These preparations may be compared with those of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 2—5).

IV. FATAL FORGETFULNESS. All these precautions would be *too late!* A dreadful word! And why? 1. *The Divine counsel has been forgotten.* "Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass" (ch. xxxvii. 26). These harpers, and violinists, and tabret-players, and feasters have not "regarded the work of Jehovah, nor considered the operation of his hands" (ch. v. 12). Self-reliance may be religious, or it may mean an attempt to be independent of God, and so end in alienation from God. How feeble and how foolish policy must become if from the first it ignores the Divine will, and at the last only comes to acknowledge a destiny above human might and human calculation! The idea of all that will be exists in the mind of God; we may know something of his meaning by constantly consulting the "living oracles," by truthful thinking, by loyal acting—in a word, by communion with the living God. What can attention to ramparts and ditches and reservoirs avail, if men have not found their defence in God? If he be trusted, what is there to fear? If he be denied, what can shield from calamity? "The fate of Jerusalem is said to have been fashioned long ago in God. But Jerusalem might have averted its realization, for it was no absolute decree. If Jerusalem repented, that realization would be averted" (Delitzsch). 2. *Divine warnings have been neglected.* God had *called*—in *that day;* at every critical time. By many ways he speaks—by the living and passionate tones of prophet and brother man, by the general course of events, by the touch of sorrow, by the hints of personal experience. There is a time for everything under the sun; to know our opportunity makes the wisdom of the world; to know the "time of our visitation" is the wisdom of heaven. But, alas! the Jews knew it not; "rushing to the banquet-table with despair in their hearts, and wasting the provisions which ought to have been husbanded for the siege." "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." The *sensualism of despair* (Cheyne). When the light of life, bright faith and hope toward God, dies out, what remains but to counterfeit its glow by some artificial illumination, kindled from the tow of physical excitement? *A love of life which scoffs at death* (Delitzsch). 'Tis dangerous to scoff; to scoff at the great scoffer Death, what is this but the last extreme of self-abandonment? And does not despair imply the last sin we can commit? And is not recklessness its evidence? And follows there not upon all this the shadow of a state unforgiven, a mind eternally unreconciled? Who can but tremble as he meditates on these things? "Probably if the *real* feeling of the great mass of worldly men were expressed, they could not be better expressed than in the language of Isaiah: 'We must soon die, at all events; we cannot avoid that—it is the common doom of all. And since we have been sent into a dying world; since we have had no agency in being placed here; since it is impossible to prevent this doom,—we may as well enjoy life while it lasts, and give ourselves to pleasure and revelry. While we can, we will take

our comfort, and, when death comes, we will submit to it, because we cannot avoid it'" (Barnes). But such argumentation cannot really satisfy the conscience. Blessed the Word which evermore, in the mercy of the Eternal, calls to repentance, and reminds us that "now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation"!—J.

Vers. 15—19.—*Denunciation of Shebna.* I. SHEBNA THE HOUSE STEWARD. He was the steward of the household—a high office, as we may see from the allusion in ch. xxxvi. 3; xxxvii. 2. Once it was held by a king's son (2 Chron. xxvi. 21; cf. 1 Kings iv. 6; xviii. 3). This officer stood nearest the king, and had the domestic affairs of the palace under his superintendence. The office of the mayor of the palace under the Merovingian kings of France has been compared with it. It is thought that Shebna was not a native Israelite, as his father's name is not mentioned. Possibly he was a Syrian from Damascus, and a leader of the Egyptianizing party, whose perverse and crooked policy in collecting the subsidy for Egypt is denounced by the prophet in ch. xxx. 12.

II. HIS PRIDE AND OSTENTATION. He was busy hewing out for himself a family sepulchre in the rock. We realize what is meant when we see figured in works of art the magnificent rock-built tombs of Persia, of Lydia and Phrygia and Lycia, of Phœnicia, and the vast pyramid-tombs of Egypt. There kings desired to "lie in honour, each in his own house" (ch. xiv. 18). So, too, grandees—Eshmunazar King of Sidon, Joseph of Arimathæa, etc.—built themselves sepulchres in their lifetime. At Rome we look upon the famous tomb of Hadrian, now called the Castle St. Angelo, and the tomb of Cæcilia Metella upon the Appian Way, the pyramid of Cestius. What may we learn from the habit of tomb-building? It expresses *man's protest against the doom of mortality.* On the tomb of Sardanapalus is said to have been written, "Eat, drink, and love; for the rest is little worth;" and yet the tomb itself is a witness that there hovers before the mind the thought of the future, in which man would still live and still be remembered by his fellows, even though only by means of the lifeless stone. Thus it expresses man's *infinite longings*, the cravings of a nature that nothing but eternity can satisfy. There was, then, something great, something even sublime, in this tomb-building instinct. "The power of acting for a distant object, of realizing distant good, and reaching forward to it over an intervening period of labour, has something moral in it." Yet, on the other hand, the motive may be something of a much lower order—vanity, self-exaltation. So the prophet views the undertaking of Shebna. He has no right, as a foreigner, thus to appropriate the soil of the sacred city, the slope of one of its hills.

III. THE DENUNCIATION. In the vehemence of his indignation, the prophet declares that Jehovah will clutch the offender tightly, will roll him as a ball, and toss him into a broad land; thither he, with the chariots on which he has been rolling about the city, shall go to die! Notice the opposition between the might of Jehovah and the weakness of mere man, however exalted. Shall mortal man attempt to rival the Eternal, proudly seeking to perpetuate his memory on earth (compare the thoughts in Job iv. 17; x. 5; xxii. 2)? The leading Hebrew teaching recurs—the insignificance of ephemeral and frail man in presence of the mighty, just, and ever-living God. "The renown of that sepulchre which Shebna had built is indirectly contrasted with the ignominy which quickly followed it." "That the mask of his high rank might not screen him from the prediction, the prophet expressly states that the office which he holds aggravates his guilt and renders him more detestable. Let princes, therefore, if they do not wish to expose themselves and their houses to reproaches, learn to act with judgment in appointing men to hold office . . . Infer that God is highly displeased with that ambition by which men seek to obtain undying renown in the world instead of being satisfied with those honours which they enjoy during life. God punishes their haughtiness and presumption, and causes those things which they wished to be the records of their glory to become their disgrace and shame" (Calvin).—J.

Vers. 20—25.—*Instalment of Eliakim.* I. A SERVANT OF JEHOVAH. So he is characterized. The title may be of personal, spiritual, import, or of official; or both may be blended, as in the case of Isaiah himself (ch. xx. 3); or there may be a separation of the two. Unhappy for a nation or for a Church if the true servants of the Eternal, the true devotees of right and truth, are excluded from the places of honour and influ-

ence; or if the "ministers and stewards" of Divine mysteries are so only technically and officially. The true servant must in any case be *called*. He must not push himself forward, but must be drawn forward by invisible, Divine leading. He does not "achieve greatness," but it is "thrust upon him." "In that day I will call to my servant." The words suggestively remind us of that principle of *Divine selection* which runs through the order of the world. In this, in every day, the "right men" are wanted for every place. In this day, too, there is much excitement about education. What men can do by the instruction of the intellect is very limited; in quiet places and in hidden ways, unknown to the schools, the Almighty is growing men and training men till the time is ripe for their service, and his call is heard.

II. HIS INVESTITURE. 1. *It is the solemn, symbolical way of transferring an office.* We think of Elijah finding the son of Shaphat ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, and casting his mantle upon him as he passed by (1 Kings xix. 19). *That* was the prophet's simpler dress; *this* is the tunic of a man of rank and state. The *girdle* was an essential article of Oriental dress, worn by all classes and by both sexes. The fineness of its quality denoted the rank of the wearer. Here it was probably similar to that worn by the priests (Exod. xxviii. 39; xxxix. 29). Josephus describes it as made of linen so fine that it looked like the slough of a snake, and it was embroidered with flowers of scarlet, blue, purple ('Ant.,' iii. 7. 2). This is the only place where the word *abneth* is used for any but a priestly girdle. 2. *The girdle is in other ways symbolic.* Jehovah "girds kings with a girdle," and "ungirds them according to his pleasure" (Job xii. 18). Thus to be "girded with strength" is a symbol of Divine invigoration (1 Sam. ii. 4); to be "girded with gladness," of refreshment (Ps. xxx. 11). "Have your loins girt about with truth" (Eph. vi. 14); "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end"—are noble Christian exhortations, carrying with them all the force of the old Oriental imagery. To be ungirt is a way of describing nervelessness, lack of strength and manhood; and the very picture of the good servant is of one "whose loins are girt about, whose lamp is burning."

III. THE SPIRIT AND FUNCTIONS OF THE STEWARD. 1. He is to be like *a father to the people.* An appropriate term for the chief man of a town or the prime minister of a country (1 Chron. ii. 24; iv. 5; cf. ix. 6; Job xxix. 16; Judg. v. 7). So the Roman senators were *patres.* It speaks of benevolence united with wisdom and experience—a rule both firm and loving. The great Father in heaven must be the sublime ideal before us in all positions of rule and influence on earth. 2. *He is to bear the key.* This is an ancient badge of office; Callimachus represents the priestess of Demeter as having a key upon her shoulder ('Hymn. ad Cererem,' l. 45), and in the 'Supplices' (291) of Æschylus, in like manner, Iô, priestess of Hêra, is "key-holder" of the goddess. For illustration the following interesting passage may be cited from Roberts: "How much delighted was I when I first saw the people, especially the Moors, going along the streets, with each his key on his shoulder! The handle is sometimes made of brass, though sometimes of silver, and is often nicely worked in a device of filagree. The way it is carried is to have the corner of a kerchief tied to a ring; the key is then placed on the shoulder, and the kerchief hangs down in front. At other times they have a bunch of large keys, and then they have half on one side of the shoulder and half on the other. For a man thus to march along with a large key on his shoulder, shows at once that he is a person of consequence. 'Roman is in great favour with the modehir, for he now carries the key.' 'Whose key have you got on your shoulder?' 'I shall carry my key on my own shoulder.'" (For the application to the apostles and to the Lord himself, see Matt. xvi. 19; Rev. iii. 7.) 3. *His tenure of office.* The nails must be those hooks or spikes which were worked into the mortar of the walls of houses while still soft, answering the purpose of cramp-irons to hold the walls together, and pegs to hang things on. So, in temples, armour, shields, helmets, swords, spoils of war, were hung on such nails. An appropriate image these of stability, of (to use a modern coinage) *reliableness.* All may depend upon a man such as this; all "know where to find him;" sacred and precious trusts may be reposed on him without fear of disappointment. So in Zech. x. 4 the "peg" means a prince.

IV. ABUSES OF STATION AND OFFICE. There is "another side" to everything good in human institutions. "All the honour of his father's house" will be found hanging upon Eliakim. All his humble relations—the "small fry," as we say; the "small

vessels," as the prophet calls them—will look up to him, and he will shed lustre and give support to all. The allusion is to vessels of a small kind—basins, leathern bottles, earthen pitchers. We must respect the judgment of the majority of commentators, who see a turn in the prophecy about Eliakim here. There is an impression of nepotism, of favouritism; and it seems that the firm "peg" is, after all, to be loosened from its place. And if so, how instructive the passage! How is it that man, once high in esteem and general confidence, came to be weighed in the balances and found wanting? Some weakness of flesh and blood, some undue leaning to one's kith and kin, some element of partiality or favouritism, is often the cause. "His family makes a wrong use of him; and he is more yielding than he ought to be, and makes a wrong use of his office to favour them! He therefore falls, and brings down all with him that hung upon the peg, and who have brought him to ruin through the rapacity with which they have grasped at prosperity" (Delitzsch). Whatever view may be taken of the passage, 'twere well to remind ourselves of the old lesson, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." God raises up and brings low. Let us walk softly, nor boast ourselves if for a time we flourish like a green bay tree. Our own weakness may, like a worm, be gnawing at our root. The "pitted speck" in the "garnered fruit" may be spreading, the "little rift" in the lute be widening.

> "More the treacherous calm I dread
> Than tempests sailing overhead."

Let us be content with obscurity, with *fallentis semita vitæ*, seeing that station brings out men's weaknesses no less than their strength, and the loftier the columnar height of the great, the more overwhelming the fall.—J.

Ver. 17.—*Captivity, and yet safety.* "Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee." These threatenings of the Almighty had mercy at the heart of them. Captivity was a drastic remedy, but it once and again saved the health of Israel. It was a time of home-longing and sickness of heart. It was a time when the old religious memories flooded the heart till they filled it with an aching sense of shame for sin, and supplication for mercy.

I. GOD CARRIED THEM AWAY. The enemies of Israel were but instruments in the hands of Jehovah. He reigned over their interests as truly then as in their more prosperous day. "The day is thine, the night also is thine." And in the Captivity, God was disciplining the people as no other dispensation could. Their lofty looks were changed for penitential tears, and their proud hearts were brought low. God would in due time "turn again the captivity of Israel;" and the Law would be read again, and not only be read, but be "lived."

II. THE CAPTIVITY WAS A MIGHTY ONE. It occurred to a mighty multitude; it affected mighty interests; and it produced mighty results. For this people God had formed for himself, to show forth his praise. We have to learn the lesson too. How tremendous are the powers of grief and loss, change and sickness, under which God often brings his children captive now! We are "prisoned" by pain and circumstance. In our hours of solitude and sorrow, God renews our will, separates the chaff from the wheat in our character, and meetens us for service here and for the inheritance of the saints in light hereafter.

III. THE COVERING WAS SURE. They were not cast away; they were only cast down. The almighty wings were still over them. In strange lands, amid strange faces, and listening to strange voices, they could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land. But the time of joy was to return. God was very near them still, and none could really harm them. What a covering! Not the mere roof of the home; not the mere outward raiment; but the Lord himself was there, spreading his shield over them, when they were away from the munition of rocks and from the defences of dear Jerusalem. Sure! That is what we want. He also is our Dwelling-place in all generations and under all skies.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—14.—"*The sorrow of the world.*" We have here a striking picture of that which, in distinction from "godly sorrow," Paul calls "the sorrow of the world."

I. THAT GOD SENDS SORROW TO HUMAN SOULS. These national distresses were to be

of his sending; it was to be "a day of trouble . . . by the Lord of hosts" (ver. 5). The human instrumentality would be visible enough, and both those who inflicted the blow and those who endured it—their enemies and themselves—might fail to discern any Divine hand at work; nevertheless, it was a chastisement that came from heaven,—it was sent of God. And to whatever second causes we may trace our troubles in the day of our "treading down and of perplexity," or in the day of our loss, or suffering, or bereavement, we may always go beyond the instrumentality to him "of whom are all things," and feel that what has happened to us is "by the Lord of hosts."

II. THAT HIS PURPOSE THEREIN IS OUR SPIRITUAL AMENDMENT. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping," etc. (ver. 12). God would then invite to a general humiliation—he would draw their minds to a view of their guilt, and lead them to repentance and so to restoration and life. This is always the Divine purpose in adversity. God seeks our spiritual amendment. Other methods of instruction failing, he lays his hand upon us so that we must feel his touch; he speaks to us in tones it is difficult to disregard; and we know that the thing *from* which he calls us is *sin*—sin in one or other (or in some) of its many forms; we know also that the thing *to* which he summons us is rectitude—rightness of heart and life.

III. THAT THIS HIS DIVINE END IS SOMETIMES ENTIRELY DEFEATED. "Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep," etc. (ver. 13). Both national history and the biography of individual men prove to us that affliction may produce the very opposite result to that for which it is sent. Never has the city been so abandoned to vice as when the plague was raging and the dead lay unburied in the streets. Many a man allows adversity to drive him to dissolute enjoyments or to ruinous crimes, instead of letting it allure him to a Divine Deliverer. Trouble that was intended to lead to heavenly wisdom and to the service of God only too often hardens a stony heart, makes still ungodlier the man who has forsaken the sanctuary, fastens the fetters of some enslaving vice on the limbs of its wretched victim.

IV. THAT UNSANCTIFIED SORROW LEADS DOWN TO SPIRITUAL DEATH. This iniquity would not be purged until they died (ver. 14). It would end, not only with, but *in* death. Death is the penalty of unsanctified sorrow: "The sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. vii. 10). It leads *down* inevitably to that utter estrangement from God, that unlikeness to God, and that condemnation by God, in which spiritual death is found here; it leads *on* to that final banishment from his presence and glory in which it will be found hereafter.—C.

Ver. 4.— *Christian patriotism.* The profound concern which the prophet of the Lord displays for "the daughter of his people," showing us that the reception and the record of the prophetic vision did not interfere with his strong feelings as a Hebrew patriot, may suggest thoughts on Christian patriotism. This is to be clearly distinguished from: 1. The *exaggerated self-consciousness* or vain-gloriousness which some "patriots" exhibit. 2. The *exclusiveness of spirit* which others betray. 3. The *diseased sensitiveness* which leads many to catch at the first apparent international wrong as a valid *casus belli*. A great deal passes current as patriotism which would have been allowable, if not creditable, under heathenism, but which is simply false and guilty under the Divine teaching we have received who have learned of Christ. That man is the true friend of his country who takes—

I. A DEEP AND PRACTICAL INTEREST IN ITS POLITICAL WELFARE. A part of the "spoiling" to which Isaiah refers is to be found in the threatened seizure of his country's political independence, its being made subject and tributary to the invader; this could not be other than a calamity of the first consequence in his eyes. The Christian patriot, while he ought to oppose most strenuously all unrighteous projects on the part of his own people, does well to be earnestly concerned for the integrity, the independence, the reputation, of his native land.

II. A PRACTICAL INTEREST IN ITS MATERIAL WELL-BEING. No doubt this "spoiling" included, in the prophet's thought, the destruction of its property and the deportation of its wealth. Considering how all the citizens, the wage-receiving multitudes as well as the wealthier minority, are affected by the material prosperity of the land, it is right and Christian for us to make this a matter of careful and conscientious effort.

III. A PROFOUND INTEREST IN ITS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONDITION. It was (1)

the moral condition of Jerusalem, feasting and making merry on the day of its humiliation (vers. 12, 13); and also (2) its spiritual condition, forgetting its true Deliverer (ver. 11), and slighting his discipline (ver. 12), which so much distressed the holy prophet. And it should be the moral and spiritual condition of our country which should create in us and call forth from us our most profound solicitude. And this because (1) that is the matter of most intrinsic importance; (2) that is the thing on which the Divine judgment and determination will depend; and (3) that will be ultimately decisive of our country's political and material interests. If we would do our whole duty in relation thereto, we shall: 1. Join in prayer for Divine mercies. 2. Be careful to exert the influence of a godly and irreproachable example. 3. Exert all our power as individual men and through useful organizations for the guidance and the elevation of the people.—C.

Vers. 15—25.—*Human reckoning and Divine interruption.* We have one instance, if not two—according to the application we give to the "nail" of the twenty-fifth verse—of ill-founded security. It is a lesson very necessary to teach, for it seems to be one very hard to learn.

I. HUMAN RECKONING. Shebna had carefully and successfully built up his position in the state, and he made sure that he should keep it; he had not only "feathered his nest," but he had made up his mind that he should "die in his nest." He had arranged beforehand the place of his sepulchre (ver. 16). "The nail was fastened in a sure place" (ver. 25). All his plans were drawn, and he confidently anticipated that they would be justified by the event. In this respect he was but a type and specimen of mankind; we do the same thing in our turn and in our way. 1. It may seem strange that it should be so. A modest view of our own capacities; the instruction we gain by reading what has happened to men in the past; the lessons we gather from our observation of human life;—all these might save us from the error, but they do not. 2. The fact is that men do indulge in this illusion: the boy counts on the prizes he will win at school, and the young man on the honours he will gain at college; the tradesman reckons on the profits he will make in business, and the professional man on the mark he will make in his vocation; the minister anticipates the work he will accomplish in his sphere, and the statesman indulges the confident expectation that he will carry the measures on which his heart is set. Others, we know, have failed, but we, we think, shall avoid their errors and escape their discomfiture.

II. DIVINE INTERRUPTION. Shebna's calculations were to be entirely overthrown; instead of living on and dying in Jerusalem, and being buried in the sepulchre he had so elaborately prepared, he should be hurled away like a ball by the strong arm of Jehovah into a distant land, where he should live and die in inglorious exile. 1. It may be that *Divine judgment* will overtake us, as it evidently overtook and overwhelmed this prefect of the palace. His ostentation (ver. 16), his luxury ("the chariots of thy glory," ver. 18), his tyranny (implied in characterizing his successor "a father to the inhabitants," in contrast to his own severities), brought down upon him the Divine displeasure and the prophetic denunciation. Sooner or later *our* sin will find us out. If we owe our elevation to our iniquity, or if, on the summit of our success, we fear not God, neither regard the claims of man, we may be sure that at some time and in some way defeat and dishonour will await us. 2. Or it must be that *disciplinary changes* will affect us. Whatever there is in sorrow which is not judgment is discipline. And of this latter, we must all have our share; we shall find that events will not fill up the outlines we draw, that our future will be very different from that which we picture it now: boyhood will not prove to be all that childhood imagines; still less will manhood be what youth supposes; friends will forsake us, schemes will be thwarted, hopes will be extinguished, props will be cut in twain, clouds will come up and rains will pour down, as we little think to-day. The hour will come when the nail that now seems so fast will be removed, and all that hangs upon it be brought to the ground (ver. 25). (See Luke xii. 16—21; Jas. iv. 13—16.)

III. THE GOOD ON WHICH WE MAY RECKON WITHOUT FEAR OF INTERRUPTION. 1. Holy service, either in the form of action or endurance. 2. The favour of God, the friendship of Jesus Christ. 3. Eternal blessedness. Between the faithful soul and these high hopes no power can intervene.—C.

Vers. 20—25.—*Authority and influence.* On the deposition of Shebna, Eliakim was appointed prefect, clothed with the robe and invested with the keys of office; henceforth *he* should shut and open, should appoint and depose according to his good pleasure. We look at—

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF HUMAN AUTHORITY. 1. *It satisfies a craving* which is both broad and deep. Doubtless his succession to the high office vacated by Shebna brought great gratification to the heart of Eliakim. Men covet office, and the authority which it brings. Many meek and lowly minded ones, indeed, there are who have no such thirst of spirit; but, on the other hand, there are very many who profoundly desire and exceedingly enjoy it. The craving is both broad and general; its satisfaction, consequently, brings an intense and a widespread delight. 2. *It conduces to order* and to all those activities and pleasures of which order is the first condition. 3. *It enables its holder to confer benefits* (1) on those whom he is most desirous of serving—"a glorious throne to his father's house," a source of strength and succour to all those related to him; and also (2) on those whom he should account it a privilege to serve—he can be "a father to the inhabitants," etc., a source of blessing to his fellow-countrymen; (3) on those who are specially deserving—a man in authority can admit to office those who are capable and honourable, while he can exclude those who are incapable and undeserving (ver. 22). On the other hand, it has to be remembered that authority (1) often injures its possessor by making him selfish or self-sufficient; (2) is often grossly and pitifully abused; (3) is often suddenly and unexpectedly withdrawn, plunging him who holds it into humiliation and distress (ver. 25).

II. THE GREATER EXCELLENCE OF HOLY INFLUENCE. Our Lord gave his apostles promise of power; but he distinctly told them that such power would lie, not in the *exercise of authority*, but in the *exertion of influence* (Mark x. 42—45). They were to be commissioned to deliver the most vitalizing and transforming truth, and to live a life purified and ennobled by that truth; their utterance and their action together would have a most decisive influence on individual men and on society at large. We inherit the privilege which the Master conferred on them. The truth they taught we teach; the life they lived we live. And this Divine, this redeeming, this everlasting wisdom, thus revealed from God, and thus manifested through us, is a far greater and a far mightier thing than the exercise of any human authority whatever. For by their attitude towards it men determine their destiny; by it they stand or fall (Matt. xxi. 44; John iii. 36; 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). It "opens, and no man can shut; it shuts, and no man can open." It is not only a mightier, but also a more blessed thing. This holy influence, thus exerted by the wise and good, through lip and life, (1) shuts men out of evils into the power of which none can thenceforth draw them; (2) opens the gate into kingdoms from which none can exclude them—those of Divine wisdom, of holiness, of usefulness, of heavenly joy and glory; (3) has a salutary and elevating effect upon the heart of him who wields it. It blesses him that gives as much as him that takes. 1. Only the minority among mankind can possibly exercise *authority;* it is to a small fraction only that it will prove a blessing; and from all of these it will soon be removed by the fickleness of man or by the lapse of time. 2. But it is open to every child of man to exert a holy *influence;* this will confer a true, spiritual, undying good on others, and will leave a lasting, inward blessing on the giver. It is far the better of the two.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Ill-timed joy.* The "valley of vision" is, without doubt, Jerusalem, though Mr. Birks thinks Samaria may be meant. The Prophet Isaiah speaks thus poetically of it as the place where he had his visions. Now he sees the people hurrying, in great excitement, on to the flat roofs of the city, to watch the gathering hosts of Sennacherib's army. The attitude of the people surprised him. At such a time, when pestilence decimated the inhabitants, the leading citizens had fled to secure their personal safety, and the enemy was at the very door, he looked for humiliation before God, or at least the calmness of a noble courage; but alas! even in such an hour it was a "tumultuous city, a joyous city."

I. JOY IS ILL-TIMED WHEN IT EXPRESSES SELF-SECURITY. Foolish notions of the impregnability of their city possessed the Jews, in spite of the fact that it had been taken. Self-reliance blinded them to the elements of weakness in themselves, and to

the strength and energy of their foes. We have heard many a man laugh at threatened danger, and say, "I am safe," and show, as Jerusalem did, the folly of joy with no better basis than self-security.

II. JOY IS ILL TIMED WHEN IT EXPRESSES THE RECKLESSNESS OF DESPAIR. Some think that was rather the spirit of Jerusalem at this time—the spirit which says, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" (see vers. 12, 13). Self-restraint is very dependent on hope. Illustrate by the wild excitement and foolish things done when shipwreck is imminent; or by the riotings of the man who knows he is within an hour of bankruptcy. "I said of laughter, It is mad." There is an old saying which explains such reckless, heartless joy: "Whom the gods would destroy they first dement." All such joy is foolish and perilous, especially because it keeps men from the duty of the hour, the doing of which might be the means of delivering them from the danger.

III. JOY IS ILL TIMED WHENEVER IT HAS NO ROOTAGE OF RELIANCE ON GOD. Joy in God is the foundation of all joy. We can rejoice in what we possess; for it is God-given. We can rejoice in what we lose; for the Lord taketh away. We can rejoice in the future; for "the Lord doth provide." We can rejoice in the darkness and peril; for "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The moral influence of pestilence.* "Thy slain men are not slain with the sword." "The words imply something like a reproach of cowardice. Those who had perished had not died fighting bravely in battle, but by the pestilence which then, as at all times, was prevalent in the crowded streets of a besieged city." The law of epidemic disease is found to be this—the conditions which are peculiarly favourable to the development of vice and immorality are exactly the conditions most favourable to epidemic disease. Illustrative references may be made to overcrowding in houses, and to want of cleanliness, and neglect of adequate sanitary precautions. From the picture given in the passage now before us we gather the following sentences.

I. PESTILENCE CREATES FRIGHT. And this prepares the way for the march of the pestilence; partly because those in whom are the seeds of disease go to other places, carrying the evil with them; and partly because fear lowers vitality, and so limits the power of resistance to disease. Fright in time of pestilence was painfully exhibited in the recent visit of the cholera to the towns in the south of France.

II. PESTILENCE BREAKS UP SOCIAL LIFE. By the flight, from the infected neighbourhood, of all whose means permit. By the disturbance of commerce, business, education, etc. Worse than this, danger of life nourishes self-interest, so that men are ready to sacrifice others to save themselves. At such times the worst of humanity is revealed in the many, and the best of humanity in the few.

III. PESTILENCE OFTEN LEADS TO RECKLESSNESS. As was most painfully seen in the time of the great plague of London, and as is indicated by Isaiah in the text. Despair flings the reins on the neck of lust.

IV. PESTILENCE MAKES HEROES. Madame de Genlis tells of an incident in connection with the *peste* at Marseilles. The true nature of the disease was unknown, and could only be discovered by a *post-mortem* examination, but that was certain death to the operator. All the doctors drew back. Then a young surgeon, named Guyon, of great celebrity in his profession, devoted himself for the safety of his country. He made the necessary examination, recorded his observations, made his suggestions, placed the papers in a vase of vinegar, retired to the lazaretto, and in twelve hours was dead—a hero made by the pestilence.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—"*A time to weep.*" "Therefore I say, Look away from me; let me weep bitterly." Eastern weeping is excessive, unrestrained. Westerns go to the other extreme, and severely repress all expressions and signs of emotion. Eastern grief is often exaggerated, and it is in danger of being conventional and even hypocritical. Public weeping, at least on the part of the prophets, became a testimony and a warning. It belonged to their teaching by signs. Isaiah's weeping here drew public attention, and led to inquiries as to the meaning of such exceeding distress. The following points are sufficiently suggestive to need no more than brief statement.

I. WE MAY WEEP IN ANTICIPATION. If we can see trouble ahead, and our distress

can be the means of awakening others who are careless, but who ought to be preparing to meet the trouble, our very griefs may be a "fore-warning."

II. WE MAY WEEP IN TIME OF TROUBLE. Because tears are the natural expressions of feeling, and the natural relief of overcharged feeling. Danger to brain and heart attend undue restraint of tears.

III. WE MAY WEEP IN SYMPATHY WITH OTHERS. Often such silent sympathy is more effective than any words. To *feel with* another so as to join in the same expression of feeling is most soothing and comforting. The sublime illustration of this is our Redeemer weeping in human sympathy with gentle Mary at the grave of Lazarus.

IV. WE MUST NOT LET OUR WEEPING BECOME A SELF-INDULGENCE. This is a greater peril to us all than we are wont to estimate. There is a luxury of grief; a keeping it up for the sake of the comforting and petting it brings; a pleasant giving way. Weeping is wrong, is mischievous, the moment it passes beyond the bounds of what is necessary for relief. As soon as self comes in, and we *will* to give way, our weeping becomes sin.

V. WE MAY WEEP AS A TESTIMONY. For this we have the example of our Divine Lord and Master, who "when he beheld the city [of Jerusalem—the very city concerning which Isaiah wept], wept over it, saying, Oh that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that make for thy peace!" John Howe most suggestively calls this "The Redeemer's tears wept over lost souls."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Man's trust in his weapons.* "Thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest." A sermon for the times, in which the highest science and inventive skill are devoted to the perfecting of the deadliest engines of war; and when men dare to say that "Providence is always on the side of the largest battalions." "Some trust in horses, and some in chariots, but we will trust in the Name of the Lord;" "A horse is a vain thing for safety;" "God is a Refuge for us."

I. MEN TRUSTING IN WEAPONS ONLY. By the term "weapons" understanding all that belongs to armies, navies, fortifications, and the material forces on which nations depend (see vers. 9—11). So often we hear that "Her navy is England's defence;" "Her insular position is her security." Great guns, powerful ships, efficient drill, brave hearts—these, they say, guard Albion's honour. But these are only *things*, and they have to be continually changed and renewed. We can never be quite sure that we are abreast of the war-engines or the war-force of other nations, and trust in mere weapons involves keeping the nation at a perpetual strain. Again and again we are alarmed as somebody argues our insecurity because of the state of our army and navy and coaling-stations.

II. MEN TRUSTING IN GOD ONLY. They should trust in God *first* and *chiefly*; but not *only*, if by that is meant letting the trust keep our hands idle, and put us on an expectation of miraculous deliverance. There have been times in the history of our race when men were required to do nothing, and simply to trust. In face of the Red Sea Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." And Sennacherib's army was overthrown without use of man's military forces. But these are exceptional cases, designed to impress one side of truth.

III. MAN MAKING HIS TRUST IN GOD APPEAR THROUGH THE USE OF HIS WEAPONS. This is, in every way, man's most difficult work. It may be dangerous self-confidence to trust weapons only. It may be mere listlessness to trust God only. It is the essence of piety to brace ourselves to all noble and wise endeavour, and keep through all our doings a soul full of trustings in God. This is but illustration in the war-spheres of the universal rule, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*God's call to penitence.* "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth." These are the Eastern signs and expressions of penitence and humiliation; as may be illustrated in the case of Nineveh, which repented at the preaching of Jonah (iii. 5—9). God calls on the people to "lament their sins, by which they had brought these judgments upon their land, and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives by a holy seriousness, and

a tenderness of heart under the Word of God." God is ever, and has ever been, in various ways, calling men to repentance, because men are sinful, and constantly grieving him and ruining themselves by their wilfulness.

I. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE BY HIS PROPHETS. From Enoch (Jude 15), and Noah, to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, etc. It is the burden of prophecy. Their voice is ever crying, "Put away the evil of your doings."

II. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE BY THE SILENT MARCH OF EVENTS. See the plea of Joel on foretelling invasions (ii. 12—14). "Coming events cast their shadows before," and those shadows ought to prove calls of God to thought and moral preparation.

III. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE BY THE REVEALED WORD. "When God threatens us with his judgments he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that we tremble when the lion roars, and in a day of adversity consider" (Matthew Henry).

IV. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE BY JOHN BAPTIST. A most remarkable person, as standing on the dividing line between the new and old dispensations. He carries forward into the new God's great demand in the old, "Repent." And he shows that moral preparation by repentance is the threshold of the new kingdom of forgiveness, acceptance, and grace.

V. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE BY THE LORD JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES. They still demand repentance. Our Lord sends his apostles out with this message, and the apostles in the Pentecostal time, and in their letters, plead, saying, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you."

VI. GOD'S CALLS TO PENITENCE IN MODERN PREACHING. In this, more than in any other aspect of revealed truth, modern preaching fails. The ministers of the present day have no oppressive burden from the Lord, almost making them run away like Jonah—a burden of demanding "repentance of sin."—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Iniquity that cannot be purged in this life.* God is a God of infinite mercy to forgive sin, and yet he will "by no means clear the guilty." He will surely visit iniquity by fixing its consequences upon the sinner, and even also upon others who may be related to him.

I. SIN-PENALTIES THAT CAN BE REMOVED NOW, WHILE WE ARE IN THIS WORLD. They are such as rest on the *soul*. Sin has a twofold aspect—it is both an act of transgression and a spirit of self-will. It is the soul that sinneth; the self-will, as opposing God's will, is the fountain and source of all wrong-doing. But the soul finds expression and action through the body, and consequently there will be both spiritual and bodily penalties following upon all sin. The soul will undergo a hardening process. The body will come into disabilities and sufferings. Pharaoh is wilful. Then the Lord, in his judgment, will harden Pharaoh's heart; smite him in the tenderest part of his family feeling by the death of his firstborn; and bring down the pride of Egypt by an ignominious overthrow in the Red Sea. The soul-penalties attaching to sin are expressed in the sentence, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Death, spiritual death, is the necessary result of soul-sin. Our first father, Adam, began to die when, in a spirit of self-will and self-pleasing, he ate the forbidden fruit. Every one of us, nowadays, begins to die the "eternal death" when we sin with our souls. The sphere of the atonement made by our Lord Jesus, in his life and in his cross, is precisely this sphere of *soul-penalties*. Christ removes the penalties of sin which come upon our souls. Christ renews the life of love, and trust, and submission, and joy in God, which effectually prevents any of the hardenings and debasings of sin becoming permanent in our cases.

II. SIN-PENALTIES THAT CANNOT NOW BE REMOVED. The penalties and consequences of sin that come on our bodies, our circumstances, and others who are connected with us. God has appointed the order in which family and social life should be arranged and conducted. If we would carry out that Divine order perfectly, and obey those Divine laws faithfully, heaven, with its eternal purities, its peace passing understanding, and its joy unspeakable, would be begun below. Sin, in its outward aspect, is the infringement of this Divine order, the breaking of those gracious and holy laws. To every such infringement a natural penalty is attached. This is expressed in a figure by the familiar words, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The redemp-

tion provided by the Lord Jesus does not immediately and directly touch these natural penalties of sin. There is an important sense in which the forgiving God "by no means clears the guilty." The child of the drunkard or the sensualist will not have the spirit of drink or of passion taken out of him, nor will he be renewed from his physical deterioration, because his father becomes a Christian in his later years. Consequences of wrong reach on until they get altogether beyond hand-grasp. Do any wrong, and for the soul of the wrong there is forgiveness, and full restoration, in the Divine mercy, through the precious blood-shedding; but you may pursue all your life after the natural consequences, and you shall never overtake them, never master them, never remove them. On they go, carrying their burdens of woe to the third and fourth generation. And Isaiah reminds us that there are some special kinds of iniquity to which the rule must more especially apply, for whose consequences there can be no earthly purging. They are such as are: 1. Maintained in a spirit of wilfulness. 2. Such as outlast all warnings and corrections. 3. Such as have become a cause of open reproach. 4. And such as have been the means of ruining others. In all these cases the judgment must come, and the sinner's fellow-men must see it hanging over him as long as he lives. If it were not so, adequate impressions of the evil and hatefulness of sin could not be kept before the eyes of men. Though we should also see that these sin-penalties, lying so heavy on the race, are part of the Divine remedial scheme for finally delivering humanity from its self-serving and its sin.—R. T.

Vers. 16, 17.—*Man's plans for himself frustrated by God's plan for him.* The answering New Testament case to this is our Lord's account of the prosperous farmer, who had no room to bestow his fruits and his goods. He said to himself, "I will pull down my barns and build greater." But God said, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." In the passage before us, Shebna, in the full assurance that he will die quietly, and be buried honourably in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, proposes to build a tomb or sepulchre for himself. It would be one of the rock-hewn sepulchres on the slopes of the hills surrounding the holy city. The aristocratic families had their private sepulchres, but this Shebna was a new man, not belonging to any of the ancient families, so he had to begin a sepulchre as one part of his ambition to found a family. God's plan for him was quite different to his plan for himself. He was to be carried away into captivity, and the fair creation of his energies would fall into ruins. "Man proposes, God disposes."

I. MEN OUGHT TO MAKE PLANS. The Bible never opposes foresight, practical wisdom, reasonable ambitions, taking life with a strong hand, or the statesmanlike sagacity, that estimates public movements and prepares for inevitable changes. No man's ship is expected to drift anyhow; the man's hand must be always at the helm, and the man must know for what port he sails.

II. MEN TOO OFTEN MAKE PLANS IN A SPIRIT OF SELF-RELIANCE. As the Apostle James (iv. 13—15) puts it, men say, "To-day or to-morrow *we will* go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain." The mistake lies in that *will*. "Whatever happens, I will." "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare."

III. MEN SHOULD MAKE PLANS IN THE SPIRIT OF DEPENDENCE ON GOD; and with due reference of every case to him. As James says (iv. 15), "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this, or that." Man's will sometimes is strong, and carries him over and through great difficulties; but God is ever stronger than he, and *grasps him* with effectual restraints.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*God's violent providences.* Margin Revised Version, "He will surely wind thee round and round like a ball and toss thee." Generally the figure is assumed to be that of a ball flung violently on a smooth, even plain, where it bounds on and on with nothing to stay its progress. But a gentleman was in the island of Mitylene during a great storm of wind in winter, and observed a peculiar plant, not unlike wormwood, which grows into a compact, globular form, with very stiff stalks and branches. In the winter the plant dies down to the ground, and in its dry and light condition is torn from its roots by the wind, and set bounding over the wide and unenclosed country. He reports having seen five or six of these balls coursing along at once. If such plants were found in the countries familiar to the prophet, they would furnish a vivid emblem

of the man who is at the mercy of a higher power, and helpless either to choose his own course or to find rest. The point which is proposed for illustration is that there must be a variety of arrows in the Lord's quiver, and a needs-be sometimes for the severest and most searching dealings. God must sometimes display his sovereign power over men in a crushing and overwhelming way, in order to silence the tongue of pride, to prove that man can never get beyond God's reach, never raise Babel-towers that he cannot overwhelm. The mightiest forces of nature are God's instruments. And man's pride he will utterly abase. Compare the death of the lord who scorned the prophet's assurance of immediate deliverance (2 Kings vii. 19, 20); Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation in the hour of his boasting (Dan. iv. 29—33); and Herod's awful death (Acts xii. 20—23), when he permitted men to offer him the honours due alone to God. Man's folly in trying God's power to smite and wound is finely satirized by Eliphaz the Temanite (Job xv. 25, 26): "For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers."—R. T.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The influence of an individual on public policy.* Governments always drift into the control of the most energetic, or most gifted, man. They go astray unless ruled by some master-spirit. It is said, with as much truth as satire, that "committees are always committees of one." They are the comfortable agencies by means of which some strong-willed man gets his own way. And it may be urged that at least as much good as evil attends the arrangement. Eliakim is raised up as a master-spirit, in a time of national anxiety, and *he* is to prove a "father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." There recur times in our national history when public ministrations on such a theme as this may wisely guide public opinion. Such topics as the following are suggested.

I. THE GENIUS OF THE PUBLIC LEADER. As much a Divine endowment and trust for the world's use as the gifts of the orator, the artist, or the poet.

II. THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF THE UNPRINCIPLED PUBLIC LEADER. In his permission of wrong things. In his securing of right things by wrong methods. In the public example which encourages unprincipled dealings in private life.

III. THE POWER OF THE GODLY PRINCIPLED LEADER. He elevates the tone of society. Avoids causes of offence to neighbouring nations. Aims at the permanent well-being of the whole people. Puts the moral progress of the nation before its material prosperity. Such leaders were Moses and David.

IV. THE DUTY OF THE GIFTED INDIVIDUAL TO TAKE PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY. Illustrate by Cincinnatus. A true man finds a sphere of service for his God in the common affairs of the nation. Joseph served God through years of famine in Egypt. Daniel served his God through important national changes and revolutions. The history of each age in nations is really the biography of the leading individual of the age. The world curses or blesses the memory of its public leaders.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The symbol of authority.* The "key on the shoulder" is no mere badge of the steward's office; it represents delegated authority. Large wooden locks and keys were used in the East, and these keys were heavy enough to need carrying on the shoulder. But the expression is best regarded as a recognized figure of speech. The figure may receive four illustrations.

I. THE KEY OF COURT OFFICE. As in case of Eliakim.

II. THE KEY OF RABBIS, AS TEACHERS. Remember the expression, "The key of knowledge."

III. THE KEY OF CHRIST, AS HEAD OF THE CHURCH. (Rev. iii. 7.)

IV. THE KEYS AS COMMITTED TO PETER. (Matt. xvi. 19.)—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The sure nail as a type.* The idea may be the peg driven into the ground, round which to fasten the tent-ropes. But, more probably, the reference is to a peg in the wall, driven in so securely that things may be safely hung upon it. The word is here used metaphorically in application to the support which Eliakim would yield to all his dependent relations. It is the type of the man on whom others can depend. The following points will be readily worked out and illustrated.

I. THE SORT OF MAN WHO CAN THUS BE A NAIL FOR OTHERS TO DEPEND ON.
II. THE TYPE FULLY REALIZED IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.
III. THE TYPE REALIZED, IN MEASURE, IN CHRIST-LIKE MEN AND WOMEN. Nothing better can be said of any of us than this—Men trust us. What can be said of woman nobler than this, "The heart of her husband trusteth in her"?—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1—14.—THE BURDEN OF TYRE. We here reach the last of the "burdens"—the concluding chapter of the series of denunciatory prophecies which commenced with ch. xiii. It is an elegy "in three stanzas, or strophes" (Cheyne)—the first extending from ver. 1 to ver. 5; the second, thence to ver. 9; and the third from ver. 10 to ver. 14. An undertone of sadness, and even of commiseration, prevails throughout it, the prophet viewing Tyre as a fellow-sufferer with Israel, persecuted and oppressed by the same enemy, Assyria, which was everywhere pushing her conquests, and had recently extended her dominion even over Babylon (ver. 13). This last allusion fixes the date of the prophecy to a time subsequent to B.C. 710, when the Assyrian monarch, Sargon, first conquered the country, and took the title of king (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 86).

Ver. 1.—**Howl** (comp. ch. xiii. 6, 31). The expression is common in the prophets (see Jer. iv. 8; xxv. 34, etc.; Ezek. xxi. 12; xxx. 2; Joel i. 5, 11, 13; Zeph. i. 11; Zech. xi. 2, etc.). **Ye ships of Tarshish.** "Ships of Tarshish" are first mentioned in connection with the trade carried on by Solomon. Apparently, the term there designates a certain class of ship rather than those engaged in a particular trade (see the comment on 1 Kings xxii. 48 in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' vol. ii. p. 623). Here, however, Phœnician ships, actually engaged in the trade with Tartessus, may be intended. Tartessus was a very ancient Phœnician settlement in the south of Spain, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and was the centre of a most important and lucrative commerce (see 1 Kings x. 22; Herod., i. 163; Ezek. xxvii. 12, etc.). In the present passage the returning fleet of merchantmen is addressed, and told that the harbour to which they are hastening is closed, the city desolate. **From the land of Chittim.** "Chittim" here, as in Gen. x. 4, and elsewhere *generally*, is probably Cyprus, whose most ancient capital was called by the Greeks *Kition* (see Joseph., 'Ant. Jud.,' i. 6, § 1). The name "Chittim" is not improbably a variant of "Khittim," "the Hittites," who may have been the first to colonize the island. A fleet from the Western Mediterranean would naturally touch at Cyprus on its way to Tyre, and would there learn the calamity.

Ver. 2.—**Be still**; rather, *be silent*, as in the margin. It would be idle to complain or lament. **Ye inhabitants of the isle.** Tyre was situated on a small isle, which Alexander joined to the mainland by means of a mole (Arrian, 'Exp. Alex.,' ii. 23). It is uncertain, however, whether this isle is meant here, or the strip of Phœnician coast, since the Hebrew 'i has both meanings. **Thou whom the merchants of Zidon . . . have replenished.** During the flourishing period of Tyre (B.C. 1025—585), Zidon, though it had generally kings of its own, played a secondary part to Tyre, and for the most part acquiesced in Tyrian supremacy. Its best sailors served in the Tyrian fleet (Ezek. xxvii. 8), and its merchants were content to enrich the recognized "chief city."

Ver. 3.—**By great waters**; rather, *on great waters*; i.e. on the waters of the Mediterranean (cf. Ps. cvii. 23; Ezek. xxvii. 26). The Egyptian vessels conveyed the corn intended for exportation to the ports at the mouths of the Nile, where it was transhipped aboard Phœnician craft, which carried it on the open sea to the countries needing it. We never hear of the Egyptians disputing the trade of the Mediterranean with the Phœnicians and the Greeks, though they certainly had trading-vessels at times on the waters of the Red Sea. **The seed of Sihor**; *i.e.* the corn of the Nile valley. "Sihor," or rather "*Shihor*," is the only proper name by which the Nile is designated in the Hebrew Scriptures. It means "the dark," "the turbid," and may be compared with the modern "Bahr-el-*azrak*," used of the Eastern or Abyssinian Nile, and with the term "Nilus" itself, if that signifies "the dark blue stream." It occurs, as the name of the Nile, only in Josh. xiii. 3; 1 Chron. xiii. 5; Jer. ii. 18; and the present place. **Is her revenue**; *i.e.* "produces a portion of her annual income." **And she is a mart of nations** (so Gesenius and Ewald). Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne translate, "*It* is

the *gain* of the nations," referring "it" to the corn which the Tyrians exported.

Ver. 4.—**Be thou ashamed, O Zidon.** Zidon, the most ancient and venerable of the Phœnician cities (Gen. x. 15; Josh. xi. 8; xix. 28; Judg. xviii. 7; Justin, xviii. 3, etc.), is called upon to feel shame because Tyre is captured. The ruin of the metropolitan city would be felt as a disgrace by all the lesser towns, and by Zidon especially. **The sea . . . even the strength of the sea;** rather, *the stronghold of the sea;* i.e. Tyre herself. Tyre declares that she is childless, has neither son nor daughter, is as if she had never travailed nor brought forth children. **I travail not,** etc.; rather, *I have not travailed, nor brought forth, nor nourished up,* etc. My children being dead or taken from me, it is as if I had never borne them.

Ver. 5.—**As at the report concerning Egypt;** rather, *when the rumour shall reach Egypt* (see the Septuagint, the Vulgate, Gesenius, Knobel, Cheyne, etc.). **They shall be sorely pained.** The Egyptians bore no great affection towards any foreign nation. They were a people whose charity began and ended at home. But the fall of Tyre was always a shock to them, and was felt to portend evil to themselves. The Asiatic power which was strong enough to capture the island-fortress would be a formidable enemy to Egypt itself, and might be expected at no distant date to attempt the conquest of the Nile valley.

Ver. 6.—**Pass ye over to Tarshish.** The advice was good, and may, perhaps, have been followed to some extent. When Sennacherib attacked Elulæus of Sidon (B.C. 701), that monarch fled across the sea ('Records of the Past,' vol. i. p. 35), probably to Cyprus. When Alexander finally ruined Tyre, a part of the population made its escape on shipboard to Carthage (Arrian, 'Exp. Alex.,' ii. 24, § 8). An escape of the kind is represented in the Assyrian sculptures (Layard, 'Monuments of Nineveh,' first series, pl. 71).

Ver. 7.—**Is this your joyous city?** literally, *your joyous one;* i.e. Can this wretched heap of ruins be the rich and joyous Tyre? **Whose antiquity is of ancient days.** Though regarded as less ancient than Zidon (Justin, xviii. 3), Tyre nevertheless claimed a very remote antiquity. Herodotus was told (about B.C. 450) that its temple of Hercules (Melkarth) had been built two thousand three hundred years previously (Herod., ii. 44). Q. Curtius makes the city to have been founded by Agenor, the father of Cadmus, who was supposed to have lived three hundred years before the Trojan War ('Vit. Alex.,' iv. 4). It must be noted, however, on the other hand, that there is no mention at all of Tyre in Homer, and none in Scripture until the time of Joshua (Josh. xix. 29), about B.C. 1300. **Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn** (so Lowth, Rosenmüller, Gesenius, Ewald, Kay). Others render the passage, "whose feet were wont to carry her afar off to sojourn." In the one case the coming flight and exile, in the other the past commercial enterprise of the city, is pointed at.

Ver. 8.—**Who hath taken this counsel?** Who can have conceived the thought of destroying a city at once so powerful and so conducive to the advantage of other states? The answer is given in the next verse. **The crowning city;** *i.e.* "the dispenser of crowns." Either to the governors of her colonies, or perhaps to the other cities of Phœnicia Proper. It is not quite clear whether the kings of those cities needed the sanction of Tyre to confirm them on their thrones, or not. The Hebrew word used must certainly be rendered "crowning," and not "crowned." **Whose merchants are princes.** Not actually sovereigns, but the chief men in the state under the king. **Traffickers;** literally, *Canaanites.* But the ethnic name seems to have early acquired the secondary meaning of "traders" (see Prov. xxxi. 24; Job xli. 6).

Ver. 9.—**The Lord of hosts hath purposed it;** rather, *hath counselled it.* The word is the same as that used in the opening clause of ver. 8. God has conceived the thought of destroying Tyre, for the reasons which the prophet proceeds to specify: 1. **To stain the pride of all glory;** or, *of all beauty.* Not that "glory" or "beauty" are displeasing to him, or provoke his envy, as the heathen thought (Herod., vii. 10, § 4), but that those who "pride" themselves on their glory and beauty offend him. 2. **To bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth;** *i.e.* to render contemptible those whom the world honours, though they do not deserve honour.

Ver. 10.—**Pass through thy land as a river;** rather, *overflow thy land, as the Nile.* Shake off all restraint; that is, give thy desires free vent—be no longer cramped and confined by the restrictions of the metropolis. Tartessus is addressed, as the leading colony, and perhaps the one most oppressed; and in her person all the colonies are called on to shake themselves free of the mother city. **There is no more strength;** rather, *there is no more a girdle;* i.e. there is nothing that need restrain you—the power of Tyre is gone!

Ver. 11.—**He stretched out his hand over the sea.** By "he" we must understand "Jehovah" (see ver. 9). God has smitten Tyre—the great maritime power—destroyed its dominion, and set its subject cities free. **He shook the kingdoms;** *i.e.* not only Tyre,

but the other cities of the Phœnician coast, each of which had its own king (Herod., vii. 98; Strab., xvi. p. 754). **Against the merchant city**; rather, *against Canaan.* Phœnicia is called "Canaan," as England is often called "Britain." So the "Syro-Phœnician woman" of Mark vii. 26 is "a woman of Canaan" in Matt. xv. 22.

Ver. 12.—**He said.** Jehovah continues his threatenings. **The oppressed virgin, daughter of Sidon**—or rather, the *oppressed virgin-daughter of Sidon*—may be either Tyre, which, according to some, was built by fugitives from Zidon, or Phœnicia generally, of which Zidon, as the "firstborn" (Gen. x. 15), was a sort of mother. **Pass over to Chittim** (comp. ver. 6). Chittim (Cyprus) was a nearer refuge than Tarshish, and far more easily reached; but, on the other hand, it was much less safe. Sargon and Esarhaddon both of them exercised dominion over it; and when Abdi-Milkut, King of Sidon, fled there in the reign of the latter, the Assyrian monarch pursued him, caught him, and "cut off his head" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 137). Still, it was so often sought by princes flying from Phœnicia when attacked by Assyria, that cuneiform scholars call it "the usual refuge of the Phœnician kings" ('Transactions of Bibl. Archæology Society,' vol. iv. p. 86). **There also shalt thou have no rest.** Cyprus submitted to Sargon ('Records of the Past,' vol. vii. p. 26), and again to Esarhaddon (ibid., vol. viii. p. 108). It was included in the dominions of Asshur-bani-pal (G. Smith, 'History of Asshur-bani-pal,' pp. 31, 32). After Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Tyre, it was annexed by Egypt (Herod., ii. 182), on the conquest of which country by Cambyses it became Persian. The Phœnicians had "no rest" there after Assyria had once found her way to the island.

Ver. 13.—**Behold the land of the Chaldeans** (comp. ch. xiii. 19; xlvii. 1, 5; xlviii. 14, 20). Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah knows the people as Chaldeans (Kasdim), the capital as Babylon. Kaldi, in the inscriptions, is a rare word, and the name of a not very important tribe. Yet Berosus uses the term to designate the whole nation. **This people was not**; rather, *is not*; i.e. "is no more a people"—"has ceased to exist." Sargon conquered Babylon in B.C. 710, and made himself king, ruling it, together with Assyria, until B.C. 705, when it rebelled and recovered its independence. Sennacherib reconquered it in B.C. 704, and again in B.C. 700, when he made his eldest son viceroy. Esarhaddon ruled over both countries, as did Asshur-bani-pal. Though later (about B.C. 620—610) Babylon reasserted her independence, and became a great empire, yet Isaiah was justified, at almost any period of his life after B.C. 710, in speaking of her as non-existent. Till **the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness.** There is no "till" in the original. The clause is separate and independent, not connected grammatically with the preceding. Nor does it assert that the Assyrians "founded" Babylon for any one, but only that they "established" it, or "appointed" it to be a habitation for "*the beasts of the desert*" (comp. ch. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14; Jer. l. 39, etc.). The prophet views the Assyrians as intending to reduce Babylon to ruins, and leave it waste and uninhabited. **The towers thereof**; *i.e.* the siege-towers requisite for reducing so strong a city. **They raised up**; rather, *they made bare* (cf. Hab. iii. 9). **He brought it to ruin.** "He" is "the Assyrian." The case of Babylon is adduced to increase the alarm of Tyre, by reminding the inhabitants of what the Assyrians had done to a town greater and stronger than their own. The allusion is probably to certain severities of Sargon's in B.C. 710, which, however, are rhetorically exaggerated. It was never the policy of the Assyrians to depopulate or destroy Babylon.

Ver. 14.—**Howl, ye ships of Tarshish** (comp. ver. 1). The ships that traded with Tarshish, not those belonging to Tarshish, are intended. **Your strength is laid waste**; rather, *your stronghold*; i.e. Tyre itself. The elegy ends as it began, with a statement of the bare fact. Alexander's destruction of the city was the final and complete fulfilment of the prophecy. The captures by Esarhaddon (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 139—142), by Asshur-bani-pal (ibid., pp. 144, 145), and by Nebuchadnezzar, were anticipations of the final one, and partial fulfilments of the prophecy.

Vers. 15—18.—TYRE'S RESTORATION TO PROSPERITY AND CONVERSION TO JEHOVAH. After an interval, expressed by the symbolic number of "*seventy* years," Tyre is to rise from her ashes, and become once more a prosperous state, resuming her former occupation of a "merchant city," and once more making great gains, which she will devote to the service of Jehovah. St. Jerome thought that this prophecy had not been accomplished in his day. If so, it cannot be said to have been accomplished yet; unless, indeed, Tyre may be regarded as representing the commercial spirit, which, under Christianity, is not necessarily alien from religion, but shows itself sometimes altogether friendly to the Church, supplying ways and means for ten thousand philan-

thropic and praiseworthy enterprises (ver. 18).

Ver. 15.—**Tyre shall be forgotten**; *i.e.* "shall cease to occupy men's thoughts, as a factor in politics—shall pass out of their calculations, and count for nothing." **Seventy years.** "Forty years" and "seventy years" are the chief representatives in Scripture of an indefinite time. The week of creation seems to have given to seven its quasi-sacred character, which passed from the primary number to the corresponding decimal one. The sacred use of "seventy" appears first in the "seventy elders" who accompanied Moses to the covenant-feast on Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 9). After this, "seventy" talents are mentioned as the weight of the bronze offerings for the tabernacle (Exod. xxxviii. 29), and "seventy" shekels as the weight of the silver bowls offered by the heads of tribes when the tabernacle was set up (Numb. vii. 13—85). The "indefinite" use of "seventy" is most apparent in such expressions as that of Gen. iv. 24, "If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, surely Lamech *seventy* and sevenfold;" and that of Matt. xviii. 22, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until *seventy* times seven." "Seventy" seems also to be indefinite in Exod. xv. 27; Numb. xxxiii. 9; Judg. i. 7; xii. 13; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15; 1 Kings v. 15; 1 Chron. xxi. 14, etc. It is absurd to count the "seventy years" of the present passage, as some do, from the accession of Nebuchadnezzar to the death of Nabonidus, for neither did Tyre begin to be forgotten in the first year of the one prince, nor did she immediately recover herself on the death of the other. **According to the days of one king**; or, *like the days of one king*. The period, whatever its length, should be to Tyre "like the days of one king;" *i.e.* unchanging, without hope. Oriental kings prided themselves on maintaining an unaltered policy (cf. 2 Kings xxv. 27; ch. xiv. 17). **Shall Tyre sing as an harlot**; literally, *it shall be to Tyre as* [*in*] *the song of the harlot*. A particular song seems to be meant, part of which the prophet proceeds to quote in the next verse.

Ver. 16.—**Take an harp. Harlots in the East**, and indeed in the West also in ancient times (Hor., 'Epist.,' i. 14, l. 25), were expected to be musicians. **The harp and the guitar** were their usual instruments. **Forgotten harlot.** In addressing Tyre as a "harlot," the prophet does not seem to mean more than that her aims were, or at any rate had been, selfish and worldly, such as sever between man and God. She had pursued wealth for the enjoyments that it brought her, not in order to make a good use of it. Hers had been the covetousness which is "idolatry" (Col. iii. 5).

Ver. 17.—**The Lord will visit Tyre.** In mercy, not in judgment (cf. Jer. xxvii. 22; xxix. 10). **She shall turn to her hire**; *i.e.* "to her commerce," to her former mode of life. But with the difference noted in ver. 18.

Ver. 18.—**Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.** There is nothing intrinsically wrong or debasing in commerce. Rightly pursued, and engaged in with the view of devoting the profits made in it to good and pious ends, the commercial life may be as religious, and as acceptable to God as any other. The world has known many merchants who were Christians, in the highest sense of the word. Solomon in his best days was a merchant (1 Kings ix. 27, 28; x. 22), but one who employed the wealth which he derived from commerce to the honour and glory of God. **It shall not be treasured nor laid up.** The merchants shall not lay it up in their own coffers, but expend it wisely and religiously. **It shall be for them that dwell before the Lord**; *i.e.* it shall be applied to religious uses—to the sustentation of ministers, the relief of the poor and necessitous among God's people, and other similar purposes. Such an employment of the gains made sanctifies commerce, and makes it a good and a blessed thing.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 9.—*The fall of Tyre a warning against pride in the glories of civilization and art.* In destroying Tyre, God, we are told, "purposed to stain the pride of all glory." The word translated "glory" also signifies "beauty" (2 Sam. i. 19; ch. iv. 2; Ezek. vii. 20); and the "glory" for which Tyre was renowned consisted, not in military reputation or governmental ability, but in wealth, commerce, and the production of beautiful objects, as garments, bowls, metal castings, and other works of art. It was on the perfection to which she had brought the arts which aim at embodying the beautiful, that Tyre especially prided herself. Her boast was, "I am of perfect beauty" (Ezek. xxvii. 3). By her fate we are taught—

1. THAT THE CULT OF THE BEAUTIFUL HAS ITS ESPECIAL DANGERS TO OUR MORAL

NATURE. Artistic work seems to emanate so entirely from a man himself, to be so purely his own absolute creation, that it naturally raises in him an admiration of himself and an exalted conception of his own powers. How shall he not be proud of faculties that enable him to produce works which send a thrill of delight through crowds, and are recognized as possessions for all time! Again, the beautiful is so charming, so attractive, that it is apt to seem sufficient for a man, and so to absorb all his attention, and shut out all thought of higher and nobler things. In our own time the cult is actually preached as a sufficient religion, and men are asked what more they can possibly desire than to feast the eye perpetually on beautiful objects—beautiful buildings, beautiful furniture, beautiful clothes, pictures, statues, statuettes, harmonious colours, delicate textures, soft and subdued light, graceful forms, pleasing contrasts. A weak and effeminate race is produced by such a training; the robuster virtues are uncared for; men become lapped in a luxurious sensualism, and need a warning voice, like that of the prophet, to wake them from their delightful dream to life's stern realities.

II. THAT THE EXCLUSIVE CULT OF THE BEAUTIFUL PROVOKES GOD'S ANGER AND JEALOUSY. Tyre is not accused of crimes. She is not a "bloody city," like Nineveh (Nah. iii. 1); she is not "full of lies and robbery." Her punishment does not come upon her "because of the violence" that is in her, nor for extreme arrogancy, nor for hypocrisy. Her sin seems to be in her luxury, in her softness, in her "perfect beauty" (Ezek. xxvii. 11). She is rich, she is comely, she has things of beauty all about her, and she is content. She wants no more. The beautiful and the enjoyable satisfy her. But God is angered thereby. He will not have even the beautiful, though it is a shadow of himself, shut him out from the first place in men's thoughts. He will vindicate his own honour. He will suffer no rival near his throne. If men are so wrapt up in anything as to forget him, he will remind them of himself by some terrible judgment, which can be ascribed to none but him (vers. 8—11).

Vers. 17, 18.—*The pursuit of wealth culpable or praiseworthy according to the object had in view.* To seek gain for gain's sake, either for the mere purpose of hoarding and accumulating, and so having the satisfaction of feeling that one is rich (Hor., 'Sat.,' i. 1, ll. 66, 67), or to expend it on one's self in luxuries and enjoyments of various kinds, though perhaps beneficial to the community whereto a man belongs, is injurious to his own moral character, and an offence to God. Covetousness, the apostle assures us (Col. iii. 5), is *idolatry*, and so is selfishness of every kind. Those who have their heart set on any other end except pleasing God, are idolaters, whatever the end may be. They let something, which is not God, absorb their thoughts, occupy their minds, engage their affections. They gradually and silently, perhaps even unconsciously, lose the sense of God's presence, of his providence, at last of his very existence. They become practical atheists. On the other hand, to seek gain for the purpose of making a right use of it, to spend it in the service of God, either directly in church-building and endowing, or indirectly in ameliorating the condition of mankind at large or of any special class of men, is elevating to the moral character and pleasing in God's sight. Any occupation not in itself wrong is rendered honourable, and in a certain sense sanctified, by being pursued in this spirit. Better to be a "publican," like Zacchæus, however discreditable the calling in the sight of man, if one-half of the gains made be devoted to feeding the poor, than to follow the most elevated calling and appropriate all the proceeds to one's self. "Gain" becomes "godliness" when the great wealth, which is the result of high qualities wisely employed, and blessed by God in such employment, is made an offering to him, in the person of his Church or of his poor.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—18.—*The fall of Tyre.* I. THE ANCIENT FAME OF TYRE. Consecrated to Melkarth, the principal god of the city, the temple on the island, the supposed site of the ancient city, is said by Arrian to have been the most ancient within the memory of man. Ezekiel speaks of Tyre as "in the midst of the seas" (xxvii. 25, 26). The Tyrians were closely connected with the Zidonians, those famous "hewers of timber" (1 Kings v. 6). And perhaps the Zidonians of Homer ('Il.,' vi. 290; xxiii. 743;

'Od.,' iv. 841; xvii. 424) include the Tyrians. Besides their renown in forest-craft, they were skilful workers in brass and copper. In Solomon's time there was close intercourse between Hebrews and Tyrians, the former exchanging their corn and oil for the cedar-wood and precious metals of the latter (1 Kings ix. 11—14, 26—28; x. 22). The denunciation of the prophets against Tyre begin from the time when the Tyrians and the Phœnicians began to buy Hebrew captives and sell them to the Greeks: "The children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians that ye might remove them far from their border" (Joel iii. 6; cf. Amos i. 9, 10). A great commercial people, they planted Carthage, and became possessed of Cyprus. We find one Luliya (or Elulæus) named in Josephus ('Ant.,' ix. 14. 2) as ruling over Tyre during this prosperous period; he seems to have been, in fact, king also of Zidon and suzerain of Phœnicia. He fled before Sennacherib to Cyprus ('Records of the Past,' vii. 61). It is in the light of such relations—Phœnicia trembling before the advance of Assyria and warned by the fate of Babylonia—that we must read the prophecy or oracle.

II. THE RUMOUR OF ILL. We see in this picture the trading-ships of the Phœnicians returning from their distant colonies in Spain on the Bætis (or Guadalquivir). Their last landing-place on the way home is Cyprus, the "land of Chittim" (or Citium). And here the news meets them that their harbour and their home is desolate. And a mighty howl arises from the fleet, while the dwellers on the Phœnician coast are dumb with grief. Egypt also is implicated in the fate of Tyre. In the description by Ezekiel of the wealth of Tyre, we read, "Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail" (xxvii. 7). So here the "seed of Sihor" (the Nile) is on the ocean-highway, their trade being carried on for them by the Phœnicians. The Phœnician coast was the "barn for the corn of the Nile," and they distributed it to the nations. And now Phœnicia is addressed through Zidon, the ancient ancestral city. The city was thought of in antiquity as feminine—sometimes as a daughter, sometimes as a mother. So Tyrian coins bear the legend, "Of Tyre, mother of the Zidonians." The rocky stronghold of the sea speaks, and complains that she is like a barren woman; for the war has robbed her of her young men and maidens. In effect she says, "I am destroyed; my wealth and resources gone, my commerce annihilated, I cease to plant cities and colonies, and to nourish and foster them by my trade." Tyre, a daughter of the sea, is denied by her own mother. As Tyre was an outpost of Egypt against the Assyrians, she, too, is "sore pained" at the sad tidings.

III. THE LAMENTATION OVER TYRE. The prophet advises the people to migrate to their Spanish colonies; for the capital can no longer shelter them. From later times we have a picture of a scene similar to that now passing before his mind's eye. When Alexander the Great besieged Tyre they at first laughed at the king and the mound which he built, "as if he thought to vanquish Poseidon," god of the sea; afterwards, as it grew surprisingly, they sent their children, wives, and old people to Carthage" (Diod., xvii. 41). And the LXX. says that they fled thither on this occasion. 1. *Luxury and pride ashamed.* The prophet looks in vision upon a heap of ruins; it is like the corpse of a once beautiful and proud woman. Once she was the "joyous city, that dwelt carelessly" (Zeph. ii. 15), and felt herself to be without a rival. She boasted of her *antiquity.* The Tyrians told Herodotus (in the fifth century B.C.) that their city had already been founded two thousand three hundred years (ii. 44). Her traders, like those of Venice in the Middle Ages, had been reckoned the equals of princes and kings (Jer. xxv. 22). But greed, arrogance, oppressive conduct towards other nations, had brought her low. 2. *The judgment of God.* The hand of Jehovah must be traced and felt in all this. He brings the haughty low, that the meek and despised may be raised. Beauty, which has itself associations of sacredness to the imagination, is not beautiful when it gilds and glorifies infamy. Then Jehovah *desecrates* it, and brings disgrace upon the grace and honour of the merely worldly great. "Whoever is the instrument, yet the overthrow of wicked, proud, and vicious cities and nations is to be traced to the God who rules in the empires and kingdoms of the earth; and he often selects the most distinguished and important cities and men to make them examples to others, and to show the ease with which he can bring all down to the earth." The dispersion of the people is strongly contrasted with their own belief in their rooted and immemorial origin in the soil of Phœnicia.

IV. EMANCIPATION OF THE TYRIAN COLONIES. Harshly treated, perhaps, they take the first opportunity of throwing off the yoke of the mother-city. Especially Tartessus is mentioned. She may now freely and unhindered overflow the land, even as, in the time of the inundation, Nile's waters overspread Egypt (Amos viii. 8; ix. 5). There is no "girdle;" perhaps no bridle in the hand of Tyre any longer to restrain her colony's defiant independence. For all the kingdoms that border upon the sea, especially Phœnicia and Syria, have been convulsed with alarm, as Jehovah's hand was stretched out, and the order was given to destroy the strong places of Canaan. Then, under the favourite figure of the woman, the city appears no longer an inviolate maiden, but dishonoured and defiled. Cyprus will afford no refuge for the fugitives, for she will be rejoicing at deliverance from the Phœnician yoke, and will not welcome them; or the "long arm" of the Assyrian will reach them there. No power, however well founded and far-extending, can endure against the *fiat* of the Almighty. It might seem impossible that a city so celebrated and so powerful, so well defended and fortified, and associated with many allies and confederates, should be destroyed and overturned; but "all that appears permanent in the world stands or falls according to the will of God, and there is no need of the instruments of war for overturning the best fortified place, but the mere expression of the will of God is enough" (Calvin). *Warning from the fate of the Kasdim.* We know little about this people, who are, perhaps, used to denote Babylon in general, conquered by Sargon. This land has been turned into a desert and haunt of wild beasts. The battering-engines of the Assyrians have reduced their forts to ruin. All around denotes the impending ruin to Tyre.

V. THE RESTORATION OF TYRE. At the end of "seventy years," probably put for a long period, it appears that commerce will revive, "but only as the handmaid of religion." This is the main truth to be dwelt on, and the obscurity of the passage must be left to the exegetes. Recurring to the city under the image of the woman—now a singing-woman—the prophet looks forward to the time when there will be the mirth of restored prosperity in the seats of Tyre. "When it begins again to make love to all the world, it will get rich again from the profit acquired by this worldly intercourse. Wealth will no longer be stored up and capitalized as formerly, but tributes and presents will be given to Israel, and thus help to sustain in abundance and clothe in stately dress the nation which dwelt before Jehovah, *i.e.* whose true dwelling-place was in the temple before the presence of God (Ps. xxvii. 4; lxxxiv. 5)" (Delitzsch). In Christian times there was a Church at Tyre, visited by St. Paul (Acts xxi. 3, 4), and so its trade was connected with the spread of the gospel.

LESSONS. 1. *God mingles compassion with his chastisements of cities, peoples, and individuals.* If so towards the wicked, how much more towards the children of his adoption and love! Restoration, revivals of prosperity, are from him who, as the proverb says, "never smites with both hands." 2. *There is a selfish and corrupt and a true and generous spirit in trade.* A time is contemplated when riches will be no longer absorbed by a few enormous capitalists, but be diffused for the common good. The narrow-minded in trade is the sign of the narrow heart; the best traders are those whom love to their kind has taught to unite personal interest with the general good. The accumulation of immense wealth can hardly be the object of a Christian ambition. Let us hasten, by prayer, by teaching, by example, the time when wealth shall not be treasured nor laid up—

> "No more shall rest in mounded heaps,
> But smit with freer light shall slowly melt
> In many streams to fatten lower lands,
> And light shall spread, and man be liker man
> Thro' all the season of the golden year."

3. *Commerce and Christianity should go hand-in-hand.* Our sailors and our merchants should be the best pioneers of the gospel, and our missionaries the most enlightened friends of commerce and civilization. So may our

> "Happy sails . . .
> Knit land to land, and blowing havenward
> With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear of toll,
> Enrich the markets of the golden year."

J.

Ver. 3.—"*The harvest of the river.*" Egypt was the first of nations, and the masts of the vessels stood like tall river-reeds by her banks. How expressive the words are! There is life where the river comes, life along the emerald banks to which the cattle come, and on the fields where the waters overflow.

I. ALL LANDS HAVE THEIR RIVERS. Think of the Tiber, the Tigris, the Thames, the Rhone, the Rhine, the Nile, the Niger. Cities rise on their banks which are, like Tyre, populous and prosperous. The harvest is vast indeed. Ships which are freighted with necessaries and luxuries, with the works of art, the spoils of the sea, and the produce of far-away lands, all come up the river. What wonder that the river should become a type of the blessings of the gospel—that the prophet should tell us "living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem"!

II. THE HARVESTS ARE MANIFOLD. We are so accustomed to think of the golden sheaves of the corn-fields when we mention the rivers, that we are liable to forget how indebted we are to the broad estuaries which bear on their bosom the wealth of many nations. How manifold, too, are our harvests under the gospel! Where that comes philanthropy lives, and social purity flows, and justice is sacred in its rivers of righteousness, and salvation comes, delivering us from sensuality and sin. Harvests? Surely the Christian should notice how wide and vast the gospel waters are.

III. THEIR DRYING UP IS DEATH. We cannot live without rain and rivers. Cattle perish. Verdure withers. Man himself dies. No wealth can purchase what God gives so plentifully. "Hath the rain a Father?" Oh yes. Not a mere Creator, but a Father; for it is rich in evidences of his universal care and love. God gives "the former and the latter rain," and all through the ages the rivers flow into the sea. So God's truth remains! The living water flows, and the voice is still heard, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—15.—*Aspects of Divine judgment.* I. ITS CERTAINTY. 1. The *duration of time* is no guarantee against its coming; Tyre was a "joyous city, whose antiquity was of ancient days" (ver. 7), but judgment would fall upon her in God's chosen time. Both men and nations are apt to think that long continuance in comfort is a sufficient pledge that it will never be disturbed; duration begets a false sense of security. If men could only see things as they are, they would perceive that the true argument is exactly opposite to that in which they indulge; for the longer a man has been living in unvisited transgression, the longer has penalty been due, and the sooner may he confidently expect retribution to arrive. 2. *Ordinary defences* are of no avail against it. The commerce and consequent wealth of Tyre (vers. 2, 3), her replenishments from Zidon, and her enrichments from Egypt would not save her; nor would the high station to which she had mounted, nor the social position of her sons; it was nothing to the righteous Lord that she was esteemed a "crowning city" (ver. 8), and that her merchants were princes. No defences that we can raise will avert God's judgment when the hour is ripe for sentence to be executed. Wealth cannot buy off retribution, nor can rank interpose its influence to avert it; science cannot teach us how to elude it; and the arm of affection is impotent to shield us from its blow. There is no barrier man can raise which is not swept down in a moment when God arises to judgment.

II. ITS FULNESS AND EFFICACY. 1. *It silences.* (Ver. 2.) It brings the curses, the clamours, the revilings, the slanderous accusations, the shameful innuendoes of ungodliness and of malignity to a disgraceful end. "God strikes a silence through them all." 2. *It scatters, it dissolves.* (Vers. 6, 7, 10.) It sends the children of iniquity, of vice, of crime, to "the four corners of the earth;" it disperses them over sea and land. The bands of sin are broken up, and its guilty members are scattered far and wide. 3. *It humiliates.* (Ver. 12.) The virgin-daughter of Zidon should be humbled; God's judgments bring to the dust of humiliation those who have held their head high and treated others with indignity. 4. *It pursues.* (Ver. 12.) "There also shalt thou have no rest." The penalty of a man's sin finds him out whithersoever he may go to escape it. Jonah "flees from the presence of the Lord;" but whither *shall* a man flee from his presence, or from the blow of his chastisements? No change of skies, of scenes, of society, of occupations, will shut out accusing recollections from the soul, or shield from the uncompleted corrections of the Divine hand. The serious and repeated violation of the "greater commandments" of God is attended with penalties which pursue the soul

from place to place, and from period to period, in all the journey of our life. 5. *It incapacitates.* (Ver. 4.) Tyre should lose her power to found colonies and to sustain cities; she would be reduced to helplessness and incapacity. This is the fate of those whom God's judgment overtakes. What they once did with pride and joy they can do no longer, though they put forth all their remaining powers; there is "no strength in their right hand." The energies of the mind, the vigour of the soul, the craft of the hand,—all is gone.

III. ITS REMOTE EFFECTS. When Tyre fell, the ships of Tarshish would have occasion to lament (vers. 1, 14), Zidon would have to be ashamed of her daughter (ver. 4), and Egypt would be sorely pained (ver. 5). Far across sea and land, and a long way down the coming and departing years, reach the sad consequences of guilt. The wisest moralist cannot point to the place where these will not be found, nor the cleverest calculator tell the time when these will not be felt.

IV. ITS DIVINE MEANING. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory," etc. (ver. 9). God sends punishment because *it is due*; because, in the exercise of his righteousness, sin *must* be marked with the signs of his deep displeasure; but he sends such penalties as he does send in order to compel his subjects to see and to feel that the glory of man can be scattered in a moment, and that over all his magnificence the shadow of death will be thrown whensoever the hand of Divine judgment is uplifted. God's visitations are man's opportunities; then may he learn and feel—as otherwise he never would—that his only wisdom is in instant abandonment of every evil way, and immediate return, in penitence and faith, to a forgiving and restoring Saviour.—C.

Ver. 18.—*Gain and devotion.* We are reminded that—

I. WE CANNOT DEVOTE TO GOD'S SERVICE ANYTHING WE HAVE NOT HONOURABLY GAINED. It may be said that the text, taken with its context (see ver. 17), does not sustain this thought; that, indeed, it points in the opposite direction. But in addition to such explicit prohibitions as that in Deut. xxiii. 18, we have the whole strain and spirit of the Law of God. It is the glory of that Law that it so states, establishes, guards, enforces, emphasizes, the purity of the Divine Lawgiver that if any solitary passage like this one seems to sanction that which is inconsistent with it, we are quite sure that, either in its rendering or in our interpretation of it, there *must* be a mistake. Everything was done that could be done to separate the people of God from the impurities and iniquities into which other nations had fallen, and into the sanction of which they had pressed even their religious rites. We may be uncertain about many things in Scripture, but we are quite sure of this, that no smallest countenance is meant to be given in any single part of it to the devotion of ill-earned gain to the service of the holy God (see Acts xix. 18, 19). Not only such "hire" as seems to be hinted at here, but all revenue that is obtained by unworthy, unprincipled, unconscientious means must be wholly unfit for an offering on the altar of God.

II. THAT WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO WITHHOLD FROM GOD'S SERVICE THE RESOURCES WE CAN CONTROL. They are not to be "treasured or laid up." To keep them back for use at some future time, to hold them in reserve for some possible emergency, is: 1. *Disobedient.* God plainly and repeatedly requires of us that we should put out our "talents" in his service and in that of our fellow-men; and all the resources we may have at our disposal of every kind are talents committed to our charge. 2. *Distrustful.* It indicates a lack of faith in the readiness of God to provide for our returning wants, and to meet our necessities as they arise. 3. *Selfish* and unsympathizing. It is the action of one who has no heart to feel the strong and pressing claims of ignorance, sorrow, and degradation on our pity and our help. 4. *Wasteful.*

III. THAT WE SHOULD DEVOTE SOME GOOD PART OF OUR SUBSTANCE TO THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. "For them that dwell before the Lord," etc. 1. *All* our possessions are to be gained, held, and used *religiously*; they are to be "holiness to the Lord." 2. Much of what we have at our disposal should be spent in the furtherance of philanthropy: in the cause of education; in the restoration of the sick and suffering; in the reclamation of the fallen; in the help and rehabilitation of the unfortunate, etc. 3. Some of our "means" we should apply specially to the maintenance of Christian worship and of the Christian ministry. It is, indeed, possible to give handsomely

toward the erection of sacred structures, and, in so doing, to be ministering to our own importance; men may be magnifying themselves when they propose and pretend to be honouring God. But, on the other hand, we render true, acceptable, and lasting service when we give freely—and in such a way as to encourage similar generosity in others—towards the worship of God, towards the publication of redeeming truth at home or abroad, towards the support of those who employ all their time and expend all their strength in the noble work of saving men and training them for the kingdom of heaven.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The mission of Tyre, the commercial.* This is the aspect under which Tyre is best known and remembered. Dean Stanley gives a brief but characteristically suggestive description of it. "The massive remains of the ancient walls of Arvad, nearly surrounding the island of the modern Ruad, give some notion of the defences of Tyre. The limited size of the island led, both in Tyre and Arvad, to arrangements which must have rendered them a striking exception to most Oriental and to most ancient cities. For the sake of economizing the narrow space, the houses of both were built up, fearless of earthquakes, to the height of many stories, recalling, says Strabo, the aspect of the gigantic mansions of the Augustan Rome. With this lofty mass of edifices towering on its sea-girt rock, Tyre might well be thought a fit type of the ancient queen of commerce; and the prophet naturally spoke of her as a floating palace, as a ship moored by the long strand, 'in the midst of the seas,' with her 'masts of cedar,' her 'sails of fine linen, blue and purple,' her 'mariners, rowers, and pilots.'" The practical point to keep in view is that commercial nations are always in peril of getting to merely *use* other nations, and so to neglect their *responsibilities* to them. To this danger commercial England is now exposed. Very much of the talk of the day goes on the assumption that the whole world was made for the sake of England. We are being constantly reminded of our individuality, and of the precise mission of the individual; we may be profitably reminded that there is an individuality of nations, and that each nation has its separate mission and responsibility. Dr. Arnold illustrates this when he says, "There are three peoples of God's election—Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem; two for things temporal, and one for things eternal. Yet even in things eternal they were allowed to minister. Greek cultivation and Roman polity prepared men for Christianity." "God appears to have communicated all religious knowledge to mankind through the Jewish people, and all intellectual civilization through the Greeks." As a distinctively commercial city, we may observe—

I. THE MISSION OF TYRE IN CIVILIZATION. The refinement of human society comes about by the operation of the laws of association and emulation, just as does the refinement of the individual and the family. It is by seeing the things others possess, and the ways others take, that we are incited to personal, family, and social improvements. Families that shut themselves up from society keep their boorish manners. Nations isolated by natural situation civilize very slowly. Exactly what happens to the young men through Continental travel happens to a nation when it reaches out to other lands the hand of commerce. In neither case is the result wholly good, but a large share of goodness is in it, because intellectual growth and moral advancement always go along with the material advantages of civilization.

II. THE MISSION OF TYRE IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE RACE. The scattering of the nations over the earth; the development of special race-types; the separations made by antagonistic interests and aggrandizing individuals, all tend to the destruction of the sense of mutual brotherhood. And just *this* commercial nations revive, by bringing plainly to view how the prosperity of one nation depends on the prosperity of another, and how the well-being of the whole race-family can alone be secured by universal freedom, peace, and kindly helpfulness. Tennyson reminds of this in the lines—

> "Knit land to land, and blowing havenward, . . .
> Enrich the markets of the golden year."

III. ITS MISSION IN THE DEMAND OF HUMANITY FOR WORK. It is singular that man's idea of bliss should have become "idleness." The end set before a man in this life is that he shall no longer have need for *work*. Yet work is man's good—the Divine idea in

his creation; the Divine agency for his culture; and the inexpressibly sad thing to say about any man, here or yonder, is that he does not work. And commerce, by constantly creating new demands and enriching our stores of raw material, *makes work*. All hindrances to commerce, such as taxation and war, injure the nations by putting limitations on work. Universal peace would mean a healthy activity throughout the world. Every man using his ability in the service of his fellow, and getting, as his return, the service of his fellow to him. But there are evils attending the spread of commerce. Especially such as follow the *undue share of wealth* possessed by individuals. Shelley speaks of it thus—

> "Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
> The signet of its all-enslaving power,
> Upon a shining ore, and called it gold;
> Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
> The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
> The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
> And with blind feelings reverence the power
> That grinds them to the dust of misery."

To this also must be added the tendency of commerce to create selfish interests—to destroy the idea and sentiment of personal and national honour, which seeks its vindications in *war*, and to encourage the notion that we are to *use* other people rather than to *serve* them, *service* being the supreme idea of Christ's regenerate humanity: "I am among you as he that serveth." "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister."—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The dependence of one nation upon another.* Tyre was, according to some authorities, a colony of Zidon. And the figure in the text sets forth a corporate body, each part dependent on the other. Insular Tyre directly dependent on the mainland, and both closely related to Zidon. And yet further, the Egyptians had in their country no timber for the building of seaworthy ships, so their foreign trade was carried on for them by the Phœnicians. Some of the European nations now are pressing to secure seaports, in order to relieve their sense of dependence on others. Insular England does the carrying trade for the world, so all nations depend on her, and she in turn depends on the trading of the nations. In the pottery districts we were told that the white clay, of which biscuit china is made, is brought all the way from Cornwall, because it can be more easily carried than the heavier clay, and the coal, which are needed for the firing process. So even Staffordshire depends on Cornwall, and Cornwall on Staffordshire. Some countries send us corn, some sugar, some spice, some cotton, some fruit. Countries vary in their genius. Rome finds law for the world, Greece finds art, and Palestine finds religion. For its highest well-being no one nation can separate itself from the others. It lives and thrives by its very dependence. We only note—

I. THAT THIS MUTUAL DEPENDENCE TENDS TO CHECK THE WAR-SPIRIT. The people of the nations never want war. They may be roused to a fever-heat of passion, and so be driven into war; but the long experience of the ages proves that, whoever gets good out of war, the people always suffer. Classes of society want war; but only for the maintenance of selfish interests. The evil of war is seen in its shutting the markets of the world. Such is England's dependence on foreign corn, and so nearly does it consume its stores in the face of the new harvest, that six months' war would threaten famine. All classes, except those who trade in war and war material, pray and strive for universal peace. Man's true interests support the Christian principles.

II. THAT THIS MUTUAL DEPENDENCE ENRICHES ALL SECTIONS. God has ordered his world so that nobody shall be "sufficient to himself." And the more a man seems to have, the more dependent he becomes, because of the increase of his wants. The most independent man is the ignorant labourer, who can lie anywhere and eat anything; the least independent, the wealthy man who has encouraged ten thousand needless wants and luxuries. God puts the abundance of one thing in one land, and of another thing in another. And the exchange of commodities enriches all. The world is one body, "and if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." The interest of one nation is the interest of all. God is the God and Father of all.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*God's constant work of humbling pride.* "Jehovah Sabaoth hath devised it, to desecrate the pride of all glory." It is possible that reference may be intended to the desecration of the Tyrian temple of Hercules, which is said to have been the oldest in the world. But the reference may be general, and any actual case would but illustrate the general truth. "God did not bring these calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to show an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins, no doubt, reigned among them—idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon as that which was the particular ground of God's controversy with Tyre, for he resists the proud. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride; for it proclaims to all the world that he who exalts himself shall be abased." Thomson, in 'The Land and the Book,' forcibly describes the present condition of humbled, ruined Tyre: "It (an insignificant village) is all that remains of her. But weep not for Tyre; this very silence and repose are most eloquent and emphatic on themes of the last importance to the Christian faith. There is nothing here of that which led Joshua to call it 'the strong city' more than three thousand years ago (Josh. xix. 29); nothing of that mighty metropolis which baffled the proud Nebuchadnezzar and all his power for thirteen years, until every head in his army was bald, and every shoulder peeled in the hard service against Tyrus (Ezek. xxix. 18); nothing in this wretched roadstead and empty markets to remind one of the times when merry mariners did sing in her markets; no visible trace of those towering ramparts which so long resisted the efforts of the great Alexander;—all have vanished like a troubled dream. As she now is and has long been, Tyre is God's witness; but great, powerful, and populous, she would be the infidel's boast." The point to be illustrated is that God will be sure to deal with individuals and with nations, for the humbling and crushing of pride. He will do so because—

I. PRIDE INVOLVES PERIL TO A MAN'S OWN CHARACTER. There can be no healthy growth where it is present. The passive virtues, which are so specially commended in Christianity, cannot dwell with pride, which is so closely allied with satisfaction in self and the despising of others. Pride is a worm at the root of the tree of character.

II. PRIDE DESTROYS THE COMFORTABLENESS OF A MAN'S RELATIONS WITH HIS FELLOWMEN. The proud man tries to keep away from his fellows. And his fellows are glad enough to keep away from him. It is inconceivably miserable for a "man to be placed alone in the midst of the earth."

III. PRIDE SPOILS A MAN'S RELATIONS WITH GOD. They are founded on the proper humility of the submissive and dependent creature. For man the universal law is, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time," or else you certainly must, as Tyre, *be humbled.*—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*No escape from God's judgments.* "There also shalt thou have no rest." Either the colonists would not receive them, or their enemies would still pursue after them, seeking them out even where they had found shelter. Reference is intended to those calamities which befell the Tyrians in their subsequent settlements—Cyprus, Sicily, Carthage, and Spain. Cheyne illustrates the expression by showing that "the long arm of Assyria reached them even in Cyprus, where Luli, King of Zidon, had already sought refuge." The importance of Cyprus as a naval station was recognized by the Babylonians fifteen or sixteen centuries before Christ. The inscription of Sargon, King of Agané, relates how "the sea of the setting sun he crossed," and in the third year conquered a land which can hardly be any other than Cyprus. Cyprus was also conquered by the Assyrian Sargon. God's judgments never exhaust themselves in acts which fail to accomplish the desired ends of humbling men's pride and correcting men's faults. They go on until their purpose is reached. The point to be illustrated here is that God's judgments cannot be escaped by any fleeing from *the place* where God's judgments are resting. The judgment was on the Tyrians, and it affected Tyre only for their sakes. So to escape from Tyre could not result in getting away from the afflicting and humbling hand of God. This may be efficiently illustrated from the story of Jonah, who hurried from the upland districts of Palestine to take ship at Joppa, flee across the great sea, and get away from the presence of the Lord. He could not. God holdeth "the winds in his fists, and the waters in the hollow of his hand,"

and can send these to execute his judgments. And still it is a fixed idea of men, out of which they need to be driven, that they can get free of their disabilities, and of Divine judgment as correction of sin, by changing their circumstances, or going from one place to another. Never. God deals with *them*, and only in a secondary sense with their circumstances. As long as we sin we come into the Divine judgment. If we suffer, and yet the evil is not cured, the Divine judgments must continue. "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." And sometimes the freedom we have sought by changing our place is changed to an even more humiliating form of chastisement, as the Tyrians endured worse things in their escape than if they had remained at home. However we flee from troubles, we can never flee from *ourselves*, and never flee from *God*.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—*Commerce the handmaid of religion.* "Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness unto the Lord." This appears to be a prediction of the conversion of the Tyrians to the worship and service of the true God. "Instead of hoarding up their gains, or devoting them as presents to the temple of Hercules, as they had formerly done, they would now consecrate them to the support of true religion." In the line of fulfilment we may note that Jesus Christ visited the neighbourhood (Matt. xv. 21); St. Paul found disciples there (Acts xxi. 3—6); and it early became a Christian bishopric. The prophecy would be accomplished if the Christians of Tyre sent gifts to Jerusalem; as such gifts would be regarded as representative of the "merchandise." Dean Plumptre says, "Interpreted religiously, the prophet sees the admission of proselytes to the worship of Israel in the future, as he had seen it probably in the days of Hezekiah (Ps. lxxxvii. 4). Interpreted politically, the words point to a return to the old alliance between Judah and Tyre in the days of Solomon (1 Kings v. 1—12), and to the gifts which that alliance involved (Ps. xlv. 12)." The Tyrians and Zidonians contributed to the erection of the second temple (Ezra iii. 7). Commerce, as having regard to purely worldly interests, is called "harlotry." "Large marts of commerce are often compared to harlots seeking many lovers, that is, they court merchants, and admit any one for the sake of gain." Commerce is the handmaid of religion when she is—

I. THE AGENT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. In the sense of uprightness and fairness between man and man. Religion is the chief support of practical rightness, truth to word and promise, fair taking of samples, honest wages, reasonable profits, and doing the best for those who buy of us and those who sell to us. But religion is glad of the help of all good business principles, and all good business customs. Religion is strengthened by the sense of honour that is found in commercial men. Honest commerce helps on the work which religion would do in the world.

II. THE AGENT FOR CHARITY. In the sense of gentle consideration for others, and helpfulness to all who are in distress. The tendency of commerce is towards selfishness, but when touched by the spirit of religion, it is sensitive to the needs of the poor, who are always multiplied by advancing civilization. Religion inspires workers among the poor and suffering and disabled. Commerce is noble when, acting as handmaid to religion, it supports the workers with its wealth, helping the hungry and the outcast to "sufficiency for eating, and to durable clothing."—R. T.

SECTION VI. GOD'S GENERAL JUDGMENTS UPON THE EARTH (CH. XXIV.—XXVII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1—20.—GOD'S JUDGMENTS ON THE WORLD AT LARGE. From special denunciations of woe upon particular nations—Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Syria of Damascus, Egypt and Ethiopia, Arabia, Judæa, Tyre—the prophet passes to denunciations of a broader character, involving the future of the whole world. This section of his work extends from the commencement of ch. xxiv. to the conclusion of ch. xxvii., thus including four chapters. The world at large is the general subject of the entire prophecy; but the "peculiar people" still maintains a marked and prominent place, as spiritually

the leading country, and as one in whose fortunes the world at large would be always vitally concerned (see especially ch. xxiv. 23; xxv. 6—8; xxvi. 1—4; xxvii. 6, 9, 13).

Ver. 1.—**Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty.** Several critics (Lowth, Ewald, Gesenius, Knobel) prefer to render, "maketh the *land* empty;" but the broader view, which is maintained by Rosenmüller, Kay, Cheyne, and others, seems preferable. The mention of "the world" in ver. 4, and of "the kings of the earth" in ver. 21, implies a wider field of survey than the Holy Land. Of course the expression, "maketh empty," is rhetorical, some remarkable, but not complete, depopulation being pointed at (comp. ver. 6). **Turneth it upside down** (comp. Ezek. xxi. 27). **Scattereth abroad the inhabitants.** The scanty population left is dispersed, and not allowed to collect into masses.

Ver. 2.—**It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest,** etc. There shall be "no respect of persons"—no favour shown to men of any particular rank or station. All shall suffer equally. The author is obliged to take as examples distinctions of rank known to him; but he carefully selects such as are of almost universal occurrence. There was scarcely any nation of antiquity in which there were not "priests and people," "masters and slaves," "buyers and sellers," "lenders and borrowers," "takers and givers of usury." By "usury" is meant, not exorbitant interest, but interest simply, of whatever amount.

Ver. 3.—**The land;** rather, *the earth*. The same word is used as in ver. 1 (*árets*). **Utterly spoiled;** *i.e.* "wasted by rival armies, which have carried fire and sword over the whole of it." Compare the declaration of our Lord, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom . . . all these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. xxiv. 6—8).

Ver. 4.—**The earth . . . fadeth away.** As a flower that fades and withers up (comp. ch. i. 30; xxviii. 1, 4; xxxiv. 4, etc.; and Ps. i. 3; xxxvii. 2). **The world.** *Tábél* has never any narrower sense than the entire "world," and must be regarded as fixing the meaning of *árets* in passages where (as here) the two are used as synonymous. **The haughty people;** or, *the high ones*. All the great are brought down, and laid low, that "the Lord alone may be exalted in that day" (cf. ch. ii. 11—17).

Ver. 5.—**The earth also is defiled.** Hitherto the prophet has been concerned with the mere fact of a terrible judgment to be sent by God upon the whole world. Now he sets forth the cause of the fact. It is the old cause, which has reduced so many lands to desolation, and which in the far-off times produced the Flood, viz. the wickedness of man (Gen. vi. 5—13). The earth is "defiled" or "polluted" by the sins of its inhabitants, and has to be purged from the defilement by suffering. **They have transgressed the laws.** Apart from both Judaism and Christianity, all mankind have been placed by God under a double law: 1. The "law written in their hearts" (Rom. ii. 15), which speaks to them through their consciences, and lays them under an obligation that cannot be gainsaid. 2. The law of positive commands, given to the entire human race through the common progenitors, Adam and Noah, which is obligatory upon all to whom it has been traditionally handed down; but which has been only very partially handed down, and it is not generally felt as obligatory. Mankind has in all ages largely transgressed both laws, and both would seem to be pointed at in the present passage. The transgression of the "law written in the heart" is doubtless that which especially calls down God's vengeance, and makes him from time to time execute wrath on the whole world. **Changed the ordinance;** rather, *broken, violated*. Transgression in act is intended, not formal abrogation of the Divine ordinances. **Broken the everlasting covenant.** Mr. Cheyne supposes an allusion to the covenant made with Noah (Gen. ix. 16); but it seems better to understand that "everlasting covenant" which exists between God and man, in virtue of the nature wherewith God has endowed man, and of the laws which he has impressed upon man's conscience. Sophocles well says of these laws, that they are

> ὑψίποδες, οὐρανίαν δι' αἰθέρα
> τεκνοθέντες, ὧν Ὄλυμπος
> πατὴρ μόνος, οὐδέ νιν θνατὰ
> φύσις ἀνέρων ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ
> μήν ποτε λάθα κατακοιμάσει.

Or—

> "Laws that walk on high, begot and bred
> In upper air, whose only sire is Heaven;
> Nor did the race of mortals give them birth,
> Nor will oblivion ever cause them sleep."

Ver. 6.—**The curse;** rather, *a curse*. God has pronounced a curse upon the earth on account of man's perversity; and hence the calamities which the earth is about to suffer. **Are desolate;** rather, *are held as guilty* (see Zech. xi. 5; and compare the marginal rendering of Ps. v. 10; xxxiv. 21). **Are burned;** or, *scorched*—shrivelled up by the "burning anger" (ch. xxx. 27) and "fiery indignation" (Heb. x. 27) of Jehovah.

Ver. 7.—**The new wine mourneth.** Even when the joyous time of the vintage comes round, the earth is still sad, cannot shake off its depression or wake up to merriment. Even those most disposed to be "merry-hearted," under the dismal circumstances of the time can do nothing but "sigh."

Ver. 8.—**The mirth of tabrets . . . of the harp ceaseth** (comp. ch. v. 12). The feasting, and the drinking-songs, and the musical accompaniment, common at the vintage season, are discontinued. All is dismay and wretchedness—desolation in the present, worse desolation expected in the future.

Ver. 9.—**They shall not drink wine with a song.** Men will still drink; they will seek to drown their care in wine; but they will not have the heart to attempt a song as they drink. Even in their cups they will be silent. **Strong drink shall be bitter.** By "strong drink" (*shêkar*) seems to be meant any intoxicating liquor whatever, including wine. Many such liquors were drunk in Palestine (see 'Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. pp. 458, 459). All were more or less pleasant to the taste; but they would taste bitter to those who were warped and soured by the calamities of the time, which would prevent all enjoyment.

Ver. 10.—**The city of confusion is broken down.** No special city seems to be intended. "Est urbis nomen collective capiendum" (Rosenmüller). Chaos (*tohu*) reigns in the cities, where there is no civic life, no government, no order, nothing but confusion. **Every house is shut up;** bolted and barred against intruders. There is no confidence, no friendly intercourse, no visiting.

Ver. 11.—**There is a crying for wine in the streets.** Wine, though still manufactured (see vers. 7, 9), is scarce, but is much sought after. Men clamour for it at the doors of the wine-shops, but are unable to obtain it. They crave for its exhilarating effects, or perhaps for the oblivion which it brings when drunk to excess. If they could obtain it, they would act as the Jews in the siege of Jerusalem (ch. xxii. 13). But they cannot. Hence even the factitious merriment, which wine is capable of producing, is denied now to the inhabitants of the earth, with whom **all joy is darkened,** from whom **all mirth is gone.**

Ver. 12.—**The gate is smitten with destruction.** The very gates of the towns, generally guarded with such care, are broken down and lie in ruins.

Ver. 13.—**When thus it shall be;** rather, *for so shall it be.* In the time described the condition of the earth shall be like to that of an olive-ground when the beating is done, or of a vineyard when the grapes are gathered. That is, a small and scattered remnant of inhabitants shall alone be left, **like the** few grapes and olives that were the portion of the gleaners (cf. ch. xvii. 6). *There shall be.* These words are **not needed,** and should be erased. The *nexus* **is,** "so it shall be as the shaking [rather, 'beating'] of an olive tree."

Ver. 14.—**They shall lift up their voice.** Even in this time of depression and ruin there shall be a "remnant," which will be faithful to God, and which, from the midst of the sufferings and calamities of the period, will "lift up its voice," in songs of adoration and praise, to Jehovah, and sing, or "send forth a cry." This chorus of praise will go forth—to a large extent—**from the sea;** *i.e.* from the Mediterranean.

Ver. 15.—**Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires.** The reading *bâ'urim,* "in the fires," is doubtful. If it be regarded as sound, we must understand the "fiery trials" which were coming on the faithful remnant. But the LXX. seems to have had the reading *bâ'iyyim,* "in the islands" or "in the coasts;" and so **Lowth, Hitzig, and Mr. Cheyne.**

Ver. 16.—**Glory to the righteous.** The righteous remnant perceive that the calamities which have come upon the earth are ushering in a time of honour and glory for themselves; and they console themselves by making this fact the burden of some of their songs. Their honour, it must be remembered, is bound up with God's glory; which will not shine forth fully till their salvation is complete, and they "reign with him" in glory (2 Tim. ii. 12). **But I said, My leanness.** The thought of this joyful time, when the saints shall reign with their Lord in a new heaven and a new earth, recalls the prophet (contrast being one of the laws of the association of ideas) to the misery of the present, and his own participation therein. A time of suffering, of wasting, and pining away must be endured—for how long he knows not—before the joyous consummation, towards which he stretches in hope and confident expectancy, can be reached. This is the period of his "leanness." The treacherous dealers, or ungodly of the earth, will bear sway during this period, and will deal treacherously and cruelly with God's saints, persecuting them incessantly in a thousand ways. **Have dealt.** The perfect of prophetic certainty.

Ver. 17.—**Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee.** Man will be like a hunted animal, flying from pursuit, and in danger at each step of falling into a pit or being caught in a snare (comp. Jer. xlviii. 43, 44, where the idea is borrowed from this place, and applied to a particular nation).

Ver. 18.—**The noise of the fear;** *i.e.* the sound of the pursuers. Hunters pursued their game with shouts and cries. The

windows from on high are open (comp. Gen. vii. 11). It is not actually another flood that is threatened, but it is a judgment as sweeping and destructive as the Flood.

Ver. 19.—**The earth is utterly broken down.** The material globe itself breaks up and perishes. It is "the crack of doom." Mr. Cheyne remarks that "the language imitates the cracking and bursting with which the present world shall pass away." The Authorized Version is very feeble compared to the original.

Ver. 20.—**The earth . . . shall be removed like a cottage**; rather, *sways to and fro like a hammock*. Rosenmüller observes, "Alludit ad *pensiles lectos*, quos, motu ferrarum, in arboribus sibi parare solent, istis in terris, non custodes solum hortorum camporumve, sed et iter facientes." **The transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it**; *i.e.* the earth perishes on account of men's sins. **It shall fall, and not rise again.** The present earth is to disappear altogether, and to be superseded by "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. xxi. 1).

Vers. 21—23.—THE SUPRAMUNDANE JUDGMENT, AND FINAL ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM. Upon the destruction of the world there is to supervene a visitation of those who have been specially instrumental in producing the great wickedness that has brought the world to an end. These most guilty ones are classified under two heads: they consist of (1) the host of the high ones that are on high (literally, "the host of the height in the height"); and (2) the kings of the earth upon the earth. These are to be "gathered together in the pit," and "shut up in the prison," and finally, after a long imprisonment, punished (vers. 21, 22). Then the visible reign of the Lord of hosts is to be established "in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem," and he is to rule in the presence of his "ancients" in glory (ver. 23).

Ver. 21.—**In that day.** About that time—in connection with the series of events just related. **The Lord shall punish the host of the high ones.** It is generally allowed that these "high ones," set in contrast as they are with the "kings of the earth," must belong to the class of supramundane intelligences, spiritual beings of a high order. Some have inclined to identify them with the "patron-spirits of nations," spoken of by Daniel (x. 13, 20, 21); but those "patron-spirits" are among the elect and unfallen angels; they protect nations, but do not lead them into sin or wickedness; they have no need to be "visited," and will certainly not be "shut up in prison" with the wicked kings of the earth. The spirits here spoken of must belong to the class of fallen spirits—they must be included among those "principalities and powers," of whom St. Paul speaks (Eph. vi. 12), whom he calls "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and to whom he ascribes "spiritual wickedness in high places." The punishment of such spirits is, perhaps, shadowed forth in the eighty-second psalm; it was distinctly taught in the Book of Enoch; and it is glanced at by St. Jude in his Epistle (ver. 6). **And the kings.** Kings, especially kings in the Oriental sense, have an enormous influence over the nations which they govern, and therefore a heavy responsibility. The kings of the nations are viewed here as having brought about the general corruption and wickedness which has necessitated the destruction of the earth.

Ver. 22.—**In the pit**; literally, *in a dungeon*. Mr. Cheyne suggests that *sheôl*, or "hell," is meant; but the context points to some narrower confinement. **In the prison**; rather, *in prison* (comp. 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6). **After many days.** In the Revelation (xx. 2) Satan is bound "a thousand years;" *i.e.* an indefinite term. The imprisonment of the present passage is scarcely the same, but it is analogous. God's purposes require sometimes long periods of inaction. **Shall they be visited**; or, *punished*. The word is the same as that translated "punish" in ver. 21. "Visiting" for good is scarcely to be thought of.

Ver. 23.—**The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed.** Some interpret this in the light of Joel ii. 31; iii. 15; Matt. xxiv. 29; Rev. vi. 12, as pointing to that physical change, real or phenomenal, in the shining of the sun and moon, which is to be one of the antecedent signs of Christ's coming at the last day. But the expressions used suggest rather a contrast between the dazzling splendour of Christ's actual appearance and the normal brightness of sunlight and moonlight. The greater and lesser lights will "pale their ineffectual fires" before the incomparable brightness of the "Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. iv. 2). **When the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem.** The spiritual Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem can alone be meant, since the earth is no more (ver. 20). (On these, see Rev. xxi., xxii.) **Before his ancients**; or, *his elders*. Four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, with crowns of gold upon their heads, are represented in the Apocalypse as sitting round about the throne of God perpetually (Rev. iv. 4), and worshipping God and the Lamb (Rev. iv. 10; v. 8, 14).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—20.—*God's final judgment upon the earth.* In striking contrast with man's self-complacent theories of continual progress and improvement in the world, resulting in something like the final perfection of our race, is God's prophetic announcement that, as the years roll on, mankind will go from bad to worse, plunge deeper and deeper into wickedness, bring calamity after calamity upon themselves, and finally so provoke him that he will destroy the very earth itself as "defiled" by its inhabitants (ver. 5), causing it to "fall, and not rise again" (ver. 20). The judgment, as set forth in this chapter, is—

I. PROGRESSIVE. It begins with wars, which spread from country to country, until all nations are involved in them. Territories are wasted (ver. 3); cities are thrown into confusion (ver. 10); the population of the earth rapidly diminishes; the "few men left" (ver. 6) are scattered widely over the face of the globe; there is general desolation; and there is general sadness and misery (vers. 7—12). All classes suffer (ver. 2); the haughty especially are brought down (ver. 4). If men escape one calamity, they are overtaken by another (ver. 18). Treachery is at work (ver. 16), and each man feels like a hunted animal, sure sooner or later to be the prey of the destroyer (ver. 17). The judgment passes on from man to the material fabric which he inhabits; man's trangression lies heavy upon the earth (ver. 20); it totters and trembles from its foundations (ver. 18), reels to and fro (ver. 20), is broken up and shattered (ver. 19); finally, falls from its place.

II. FINAL, AS FAR AS THIS DISPENSATION OF THINGS IS CONCERNED. "The inhabitants of the earth are burned" (ver. 6); the earth is "utterly emptied" (ver. 3); the remnant that has previously escaped necessarily disappears with the earth that is their habitation; and that earth is "utterly broken down," "clean dissolved," "fallen" so as never to rise again (vers. 19, 20).

III. YET NOT UNCHEERED BY SOME RAYS OF HOPE. In the midst of the gloom, and the sadness, and the desolation, and the confusion, there are yet cheerful voices heard. *All* flesh has not corrupted its way before the Lord. There are still those who "lift up their voice, and sing for the majesty of the Lord" (ver. 14), who "glorify the Lord" in the midst of the "fires" of affliction, and pour forth songs whereof the burden is "Honour to the righteous." They constitute, it may be, a small minority; but they are not dismayed. "God," they know, "is on their side;" and they "do not fear what flesh can do unto them." They bear witness for God to the last; and when the final crash comes they are those blessed ones who "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17), and are translated to the heavenly kingdom, without passing through the gates of death, there to "be for ever with the Lord."

Vers. 21, 22.—*A sorer punishment reserved for the authors and instigators of evil than for others.* The kings of the earth to a large extent lead their subjects into sin. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, by the setting up of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, "*made* Israel to sin," and was the original and main cause of that lapse into idolatry which brought down destruction upon the Israelite nation. Ahab, by his marriage with Jezebel, and introduction of the Baal-worship, intensified the evil, and hastened the final overthrow. Manasseh "seduced Judah to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Kings xxi. 9), and brought upon Judah a fate similar to that which had befallen the sister kingdom (2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4). The blood-thirstiness and cruelty of the heathen nations were encouraged by their kings, who were for ever engaging in unjust wars, and looking for success to the terror they inspired by the fierceness of their soldiers, who were instructed to be savage and unsparing. Hence, when the day of reckoning came, it was just that the kings should be reserved for special retribution, and punished with special severity. We must not too closely press the details of the prophetical announcement. "The pit," "the prison," are wonted phrases in the imagery of Divine retributive justice. What is intended to be taught is that exact justice will be meted out; wherever lies the main guilt of the evil done under the sun, there will be the main severity of punishment. Where kings have been in fault, kings will

suffer; where nobles and prime ministers, on them will fall the heaviest woe; where leaders sprung from the ranks, theirs will be the sorest suffering. "God is not mocked." God will know who are the really guilty ones, and will execute his special vengeance upon them, however exalted they be. Nor will he spare the instigators of evil who belong to the spiritual world. Fallen spirits are ever tempting men to sin, suggesting lines of sin, egging their victims on, aiding them so far as they are permitted, and conducting them to depths of sin and wickedness whereof they would have had no conception had they been left to themselves. It is just that these spirits, who are the primary movers in the widespread conspiracy of crime, should suffer the most. St. Jude tells us of those evil angels who are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). St. John saw in the Apocalyptic vision that "the devil who deceived the nations" was at length "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are," and was "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. xx. 10). These, too, have their deserts. Inexorable justice requires for so much sin so much suffering. The law is absolute, imperative, universal. And the whole redounds to the honour and glory of the great Ruler of the universe. "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other we are the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. ii. 15, 16). The thought is overwhelming, and the apostle with reason exclaims, "And who is sufficient for these things?"

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—23.—*Prophecy of judgment.* The difficulties, historically considered, of this chapter must be left to the exegete. We concern ourselves with the larger sense it contains of a prophecy of a judgment upon the whole world.

I. THE APPROACHING DESOLATION. (Vers. 1—3.) The figures of *emptying, draining,* are employed to denote the utter depopulation and impoverishment of the earth; also that of *turning upside down,* to denote disorganization and demoralization in every civil and religious institution, while the people will be driven as chaff before the wind by the scattering hand of the invader. All ranks will be alike affected and confused together in the coming calamity. "Distinction of rank is highly necessary for the economy of the world, and was never called in question but by barbarians and enthusiasts." A variety of interests and feelings is represented in the different orders of society. Each contributes an element of wealth or of culture to the commonwealth. The untutored instincts of the mass have a certain wisdom in them; but they need to be checked and guided by the intelligence of far-seeing minds. The instinct for progress only safely operates when it is met by a counter sentiment of conservatism. The minister of religion is a necessity in society, and equally necessary the free spirit of the people to check his usurpations. The theory of society is that of a complicated organism, where all the parts are mutually dependent, and each on the whole. If the servant is necessary to the master, not less so the master to the servant; the lender to the borrower, and the reverse. One of our chief blessings is regular government and good order. How marvellous is the immense, all-teeming, yet quiet and ordered life of London! The slightest menace of disturbance to it makes us feel, or ought to make us feel, keenly the greatness of the privileges so long preserved to us. "We ought," says Calvin, "not only to acknowledge the judgment of God, but also lay it to the blame of our own sins, whenever he breaks down order and takes away instruction and courts of law; for when these fall, civilization itself falls along with them." Again, God in his judgment is *no respecter of persons.* No rank is spared, not even the most sacred. On the contrary, to whom much has been given, of them much will be required. The higher the rank the deeper the fall, and the sorer the punishment where there has been ingratitude and unfaithfulness. It is secret disloyalty to the Eternal and his laws which saps the root of life, and causes in the end the mournful sight of a nation mourning, its vigour ebbing away, its great men hanging their heads like drooping flowers. The thought of many cities and lands once flourishing, now like a flower withered down to the bare stalk, should remind us of the constancy of moral laws, of the fact that "Jehovah hath spoken the word."

II. THE REASON OF THE JUDGMENT. It closely follows upon the guilt of men. And this guilt has polluted the earth. "Blood profanes the land;" "The land is polluted with blood" (Numb. xxxv. 33; Ps. cvi. 38). This may be taken *literally* or *generally*. Kingdoms and empires have often been "founded in blood" (cf. ch. xxvi. 21). And this was a transgression of Divine commandment—the violation of a Divine statute, the breach of a standing covenant of God with men. The allusion may be to the covenant with Noah (Gen. ix. 16). But if the prophecy refers to mankind in general, then we must think of the "Law written on the heart"—the Divine teaching within. "It was with the whole human race that God concluded a covenant in the person of Noah, at a time when the nations had none of them come into existence" (Delitzsch). "*Therefore* hath a curse devoured the earth." There is an awfulness in the logic of the Almighty; there is nothing arbitrary in his conduct, nor meaningless in his words. No curse "causeless comes." The premises of sin contain the conclusion of punishment; and from the fact of curse the fact of "blood-guilt," or of sin in general, may be certainly inferred. "All Israel have transgressed thy Law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; *therefore* the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him" (Dan. ix. 11). The simple and sublime reasoning of the prophets should ever be laid to heart by us and pressed upon the conscience of others. "The land mourns;" trade is dull, taxation is heavy, wars are rife; there is murmuring and discontent. Why? The prophets are ever ready with a *because*—because of swearing or other falsehood, because of adultery or other impurity, because of the iniquity of statesmen, priests, or prophets, the pleasant places are dried up (cf. Jer. xxiii. 10).

III. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CAUSE. It is conceived as personal. As in Zech. v. 3 it is said to "go forth over the face of the whole earth," or to be "poured upon" men (Dan. ix. 11), so here it is so said to "devour the earth." The Divine anger burns (ch. xxx. 27), and the God of judgment is as a "consuming fire." And under this terrible doom Nature betrays her silent sympathy with the fortunes of man. The drooping grape and the languishing vine seem to reflect the sadness of the people, and visibly to mourn in response to their sighs. And that popular music which charms away the pain of excessive toil, and expresses the fund of health and mirth which lies at the heart of man and the world, ceases; timbrel and lute are hushed, and the merry shouts of the labourers no longer rise from the vineyards. "Jerusalem was uninhabited as a desert. There was none going in and coming out of her children; and the sanctuary was trodden down, and the sons of foreigners were in her high place, a place of sojourn for Gentiles. Delight was taken out of Jacob, and the flute and the lyre ceased" (1 Macc. iii. 45). This passage in the prayer of Judas the Maccabee is thought by Vitringa to allude to the fulfilment of the prediction. It is the doom which follows upon the *abuse* of the gifts of God. Abuse consists either in *excessive indulgence* or in *oblivion* of the Giver. He knows how in chastisement to insert a bitter flavour into the most favourite pleasures. The cup will be dashed from their lips, or a want of relish will be felt for it. A mind clouded by remorse will "darken the ruby of the cup and dim the glitter of the scene." If the time comes when a man is compelled to say of even innocent social pleasures, "I have no pleasure in them," can there be a keener mark of judgment on past excess or abuse? Better the crust and the draught from the spring, with healthy appetite and clean conscience, than the repast of luxury and the brimming wine-cup turned to gall on the lips by the secret chemistry of guilt. The city is chaos and the houses are closed, and in the fields, instead of the vintage shouts, are heard the howls of those who miss the sweet wine (cf. Joel i. 5). It seems that the sun of joy has gone down, and the bright spirit of gladness has fled from the earth. The olive, as the vine, is a speaking symbol of fatness, plenty, wealth, and prosperity. But the land will be like an olive stripped and bared of its fruits—a vineyard when the gleaning is over. Still a few will be left (cf. ch. xvii. 5, 6); for never does God suffer his Church to become extinct, the spiritual life of mankind utterly to fail, or his work to come to a standstill. Dark as every cloud of judgment is, it will yet pass, and crushed hearts will be healed and voices now dumb burst forth anew into song. It is at least glimpses of such a future which sustain the prophet's heart under the "burden of the Lord."

IV. RUMOURS OF BETTER THINGS. A cry is heard from the sea, from the Mediter-

rancan; it must be from some of that sacred remnant acknowledging Jehovah, extolling loudly his majesty, Israel's God! "He follows out and increases the consolations which he had briefly sketched; for having formerly (ch. x. 19—22) said that out of that vast multitude a few drops would be left, which would nevertheless overflow the whole world, in like manner he now says that the small number of the godly, who shall be left out of an abundant vintage, will nevertheless rejoice and utter a voice so loud that it will be heard in the most distant lands. This was done by the preaching of the gospel; for as to the condition of Judæa, it appeared to be entirely ruined by it—the national government was taken away, and they were broken down by foreign and civil wars in such a manner that they could never rise above them. The rest of the world was dumb in singing the praises of God, and deaf to hear his voice; but as the Jews were the firstfruits, they are here placed in the highest rank" (Calvin). 1. God can in a moment recreate and restore his Church, as it were, out of nothing. From death he brings life, out of the solitude can cause songs of praise to resound, and converts the scene of mourning into one of joy. 2. Worshippers are fitly employed in extolling God's perfections, and not their own claims to approbation. His benefits should excite our gratitude, and we testify it by singing his praises. 3. The time is to be looked forward to when all nations will call upon the true God. To call upon the Name of Israel's God means the spread of true religion through the world. The knowledge of him merely as the wrathful and avenging God must strike man with dumbness; the knowledge of him as Redeemer must open the heart and unloose the tongue for praise. 4. True religion and human blessedness are coincident. "Honour for the righteous!" will be the burden of the song; "Hope to the pious!" the LXX. render. The Jews are meant in the first place, as the chosen people; then probably the elect of all nations, as typified in them. "When the prophet predicted these things, how incredible might they appear to be! for among the Jews alone was the Lord known and praised (Ps. lxxvi. 2). To them destruction is foretold, and next the publication of the words and the celebration of the praises of God; but how shall these things be done, when the people of God had been destroyed? Hence we may infer that there were few who believed these predictions. But now that these events have taken place, it is our duty to behold with admiration so great a miracle of God, because, when the Jews had been not only beaten down, but almost annihilated, still there flashed from them a spark by which the whole world was enlightened, and all who were kindled by it broke forth into a confession of the truth" (Calvin).

V. REVULSION OF FEELING. Before this spiritual restoration can come about, an interval of misery must be passed through. A cry of intense pain escapes the prophet's heart: "Wasting away is for me! wasting away is for me!" He sees and feels, with realizing imagination and sympathy, the barbarous oppression from which his people will suffer. Wave upon wave of calamity seems to roll in from the horizon. To escape from the "terror" is to fall into the "pit," to come up from the "pit" is only to be taken in the snare. The windows of heaven will be opened, and a new deluge will cover the earth, which will tremble as with universal shock. Then Jehovah will "hold visitation upon the host of the highest in the height, and upon the kings of the earth upon the earth." They will be imprisoned and shut up in the prison of the lower world. Then there will be a visitation after many days: whether for the purpose of punishment or pardon, the prophet does not say, and commentators are divided. Amidst the obscurity of the passage, some truth that may be used for edification appears to glimmer. All that takes place on the earthly sphere has reference to a supernatural world. There are in a sense "angels" of nations and of men. The rabbinical saying runs that "God never destroys a nation without having first of all destroyed its prince;" *i.e.* the angel who, by whatever means he first obtained possession of the nation, has exerted an ungodly influence upon it. "Just as, according to the scriptural view, both good and evil angels attach themselves to particular men, and an elevated state of mind may sometimes afford a glimpse of this encircling company and this conflict of spirits; so do the angels contend for the rule over nations and kingdoms, either to guide them in the way of God, or to lead them astray from God; therefore the judgment upon nations will be a judgment upon angels also. The kingdom of spirit has its own history running parallel to the destinies of men" (Delitzsch).

VI. FINAL APOCALYPSE OF DIVINE GLORY. The moon blushes and the sun turns

pale, and Jehovah of hosts reigns royally upon Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and the elders or representatives of the people are permitted to gaze upon his glory (cf. Exod. xxiv. 9; xxxiv. 29). The glory of nature fades before the surpassing glory of the spiritual and eternal. Our noblest sense is that of vision, and its exercise involves that of imagination. The bright heavenly bodies delight us in part because they are significant and symbolic of light in the intellectual and moral sphere, of him who set them yonder, and who is the Light of the world. We can think of nothing more glorious than the light of the sun, except the glory of the Sun of Righteousness. *That* must be seen in the soul, in the conscience. And to come finally to the beatific vision; in purity of heart to see God; to close with the great Object who lies behind all the finite objects of our intellectual research; to enjoy that reposeful contemplation of the eternal beauty, of which every imperfect flash and hint reminds us in this twilight of life;—this is the goal of spiritual aspiration in every time, as it was of the prophet's wishful thought, piercing through the darkness of the future.—J.

Ver. 16.—*Songs from afar.* "From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous." Beautiful music that! For music has often been set to unworthy ends—to the praise of pride and power, to war and wrong. It has been said of one, "I care not who makes a nation's laws, if I may make their songs." A strong antithetical way of putting, in an exaggerated way, a great truth. The songs of a people are always with them—in the field and at home, in toil and in rest.

I. THE SUBJECT OF THE SONGS. "Glory to the righteous." How could this otherwise end, than in glory to God? For he is the righteous God, and there is no word by which the Psalms oftener describe him. Thus in praising the righteous we are led onward to praise the righteous God, as the God who inspires righteousness in the hearts of others. Thus we read that "in every nation he that worketh righteousness is accepted of God." No word reaches deeper. We may sing songs to the valiant, and the heroic, and the patriotic, and the brave; but righteousness speaks, not only of courage, but of conscience too.

II. THE DISTANCE FROM WHICH THEY COME. "From the uttermost parts of the earth." Prophecy of the time when all nations shall call Christ blessed, and when his praise shall be heard from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. We have this sound from the distant places, because in the end all true lovers of righteousness will hail Christ, when he is revealed to them, as containing all the fulness of God.

III. THE GLORY OF WHICH THEY BREATHE. There are divers kinds of glory. But God's glory is the glory of the cross! There is an empty glory of self-righteousness, but *that* is not the glory of the righteous. Far from it. The glory of strength is to help the weak. The glory of wisdom is to enlighten the ignorant. The glory of righteousness is to shape into order that which is wrong or "wrung," from which idea of being twisted and bent from the straight course the word "wrung" comes. Yes. Glory to the righteous! for they are the salt of the earth, the safety of the nation. The Lord our Righteousness is revealed in Christ, whose holy life was not for our admiration only, or for our honour and worship, but was "lived" for us and "laid down" for us, that we might be filled with his strength, and become holy as God is holy.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—12.—*The charge and the calamity.* These words give a vivid and a terrible picture of calamity that should befall the people of God. It is suitably called "the curse" (ver. 6), for it should prove an evil of the severest kind; and it would be other than a national misfortune—it would be the penalty of sin: *therefore*, because of the sins charged against the nation (ver. 5), these multiplied sorrows would overtake and overwhelm them; "for the Lord hath spoken this word" (ver. 3).

I. GOD'S CHARGE AGAINST HIS PEOPLE. (Ver. 5.) This is threefold. 1. *Disregard of his spoken Word.* "They have transgressed the laws." Those plain statements of the will of God which had been revealed in "the Law" had been deliberately disobeyed —requirements unfulfilled, prohibitions set at nought. 3. *Perversion of Divine truth.* "Changed the ordinance." The Jews were subtle and sinful enough to appear to keep the Law when they were habitually breaking it. This they did by changing or perverting it, by making it mean something different from the Divine intention, by taking the heart

out of it, by minimizing and dwarfing it (see Matt. xv. 3—9). 3. *Violation of his will as revealed in our common human nature.* "Broken the everlasting covenant." This covenant is well summarized in Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16; it has fallen into grievous and guilty disregard. Men refrained from righteousness and "did evil," yet they shrank not from the accusing eye and the uplifted hand of God (see Rom. ii. 14, 15). The people of God will do well to ask themselves whether they are not in danger of being obnoxious to the same charge; whether they are not neglecting the will of God as expressly revealed in the words of Christ and his apostles; or are not changing, by radical misconstruction, the purpose of their Lord; or are not setting aside some of the first principles written in their nature by the Father of spirits.

II. THE CALAMITY WHICH ATTENDS DISOBEDIENCE. This is manifold, as indicated in the text. 1. *Desolation.* Emptiness, waste, dispersion (ver. 1), inaccessibility (ver. 10; see also vers. 3, 6, 12). 2. *Degradation.* The land "turned upside down," so that what was meant for higher ends is employed for baser ones (ver. 1); "utterly spoiled" (ver. 3); defilement (ver. 5); resort to stimulants for false courage (ver. 11). 3. *Enfeeblement.* The land "fadeth away," "languisheth" (ver. 4); the strength of the city is gone, for even the gate (the strong place) is "smitten with destruction" (ver. 12). 4. *Abject misery.* (Vers. 7, 8.) Even that which usually excites with pleasure has lost its charm (ver. 9). 5. *Completeness and commonness* of the scourge (ver. 2). Such, in various manifestations, according to the nature of the subject and the character of the guilt, is the calamitous issue of disobedience; so heavy is the devouring curse (ver. 6) when Divine laws are disobeyed and the Divine claims denied. The land, the Church, the family, the individual life, is desolate, is degraded, is enfeebled, is rendered joyless. The best companions are dispersed, and life is lonely; the loftier and worthier ends of existence are surrendered for those less worthy, and ultimately for those which are positively base; the strength of righteousness and virtue gives place to the feebleness of folly and to the degeneracy of vice; song dies into silence and then into a wail. (1) Beware of spiritual and then moral decline. (2) Seek and find, in repentance and faith, a way up even from the dark depths of ruin.—C.

Vers. 13—16.—*The voice of the chastened.* We learn—

I. THAT GOD TEMPERS JUDGMENT WITH MERCY. (Ver. 13.) There will be some fruit spared, though the olive tree be terribly shaken, though the grapes have been gathered. All will not be taken from the holy land; a remnant shall be left. Though God strip a man or a nation of his (its) resources, yet will he leave him (it) a remainder, something to console him, something with which he may start anew. A starry night succeeds a stormy day; a calm and quiet age closes a life of struggle and of sorrow; "the old familiar faces" have disappeared, but a few faithful souls still linger who can go back with us in thought and sympathy to early days.

II. THAT FROM THE LIPS OF THE CHASTENED THERE OFTEN COME SWEET AND EVEN TRIUMPHANT STRAINS. (Ver. 14.) Those who have been visited in Divine wrath, and have seen their compatriots carried away into captivity, shall not give way to despondency; they shall learn to honour and to rejoice in the majesty of Jehovah; they "shall lift up the voice," "shall sing," "shall shout" (exult). Something (it does not appear what) in the Divine character will appear to them so majestic, so glorious, so beneficent, that their sweetest and strongest accents will be called forth. To those who stand *outside* it often seems wonderful and incomprehensible that those who are *inside* a great affliction should find such occasion for thanksgiving. But it is certainly true that the sick in their sickness, the poor in their poverty, the bereaved in their loneliness, often find more reason for thankful song than do the strong in their strength and the wealthy in their riches. And the song they sing is not one in which submission struggles with complaint, but rather, as here, the happy outpouring of perfect acquiescence in the Divine will,—the voice of sacred joy.

III. THAT GOD WILL BE GLORIFIED BY THOSE FURTHEST OFF AS BY THOSE NEAR TO HIS SANCTUARY. (Ver. 15.) "Glorify ye the Lord" in the east ("in the fires"); in the west ("the isles of the sea"); "from the uttermost part of the earth," etc. (ver. 16). Under the chastening hand of the Lord Israel went into exile; in exile the truth of God was made known as it otherwise would not have been. In other ways the judgments of God led, and still lead, to the circulation of his truth and to the magnifying

of his Name. A cleansed and purified Church will be a missionary Church, through whose instrumentality the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will be known and sung on every hand.

IV. THAT THE RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL RELIGIOUS SERVICE. "Glory to the Righteous One" (ver. 16). Ill indeed would it be for the land in which the piety of the people lost its hold on the righteousness of God. In the absence of righteousness from his character, there would be nothing worth calling goodness or mercy on his part and nothing worth calling reverence or devotion on ours. All religion worthy of the name rests on the righteousness of God. The wave of sentiment that would weaken our sense of it is one that washes against our deepest and highest interests, and should be steadfastly opposed. Above and beneath all other things God is the Righteous One, at the remembrance of whose holiness we do well to give thanks (Ps. XXX. 4), in whose purity and perfection we do well to glory.—C.

Vers. 16—22.—*Five fruits of transgression.* The key-note of this passage is found in the twentieth verse: "The transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it." All these dire evils are the consequences of national transgression. They are fivefold.

I. IT IMPOVERISHES. The prophet, speaking not only for himself, but for his country, exclaims, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (ver. 16). The violation of Divine Law not only (1) reduces a man's bodily strength, causing him to waste away, and bringing the pale cheek and the trembling nerve; but it (2) cuts down a man's resources, changing the princely revenue into a beggar's dole; moreover, it (3) impoverishes the mind, causing it to starve on empty folly while it might be nourished with heavenly truth; and (4) it despoils the soul, making it barren of those noble virtues and those exquisite graces which elevate and beautify human character.

II. IT DELUDES. It is full of treachery (ver. 16); its victims delude themselves with the notion that they are escaping, but they only flee from the noise to fall into the pit, or escape from the pit to be entangled in the net (vers. 17, 18). This is "the deceitfulness of sin." Men think they will shake themselves free from their iniquity a little further on, but they find that temptation awaits them at every point, that one sin paves the way for another: indulgence leads down to dishonesty, and dishonesty conducts to falsehood; superstition ends in scepticism, and scepticism in utter unbelief. There is no escape from the consequences of folly but by entering the path of wisdom, from the penalty of sin but by penitence and purity. They who look to time and chance for deliverance are only deluding themselves with a hope which will certainly "make ashamed" those that cherish it.

III. IT AGITATES. "The foundations of the earth do shake . . . the earth is moved exceedingly . . . (it) shall reel to and fro" (vers. 18—20). There often comes a time in the history of folly, or of crime, or of transgression, when the subject of it—individual or collective—finds everything unsettled, shaking beneath his (its) feet; it is to him as if the very ground were rocking; friends fall away, kindred disown, confidence is lost, obligations are pressed against him, the last measures are taken, liberty itself is threatened, the blackest clouds overhang; behind is folly and before is ruin, while within are agitation and alarm.

IV. IT OPPRESSES AND EVEN CRUSHES. "The transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again" (ver. 20). Sin lies with a heavy weight upon the soul. The sense of guilt, the wearing weight of wrong-doing, *oppresses* the spirit, takes away its elasticity, its freshness, its vigour. Sometimes it does much more than that—it *crushes* the soul; it makes it incapable of attempting anything better; it gives way to a fatal despondency, and pursues the evil path even to the bitter end. One of the very worst penalties of sin is the dead weight which it lays on the spirit of the sinner, killing his hope and dooming him to despair and death.

V. IT IMPRISONS. The "high ones" were to be "shut up in the prison" (vers. 21, 22). There is no dungeon, however dark and strong, in which the bodies of men have been confined that is so dark and so deplorable as "the pit" or "prison" in which sin shuts up its victims. The children of iniquity are slaves; they wear bonds which are more firmly riveted than the closest iron fetters on human limbs; they are bondmen *indeed*; their pitiable thraldom is slavery itself, of which the imprisonment of the body is only the type and picture.

In Jesus Christ and in his service is: 1. *Enlargement.* 2. *Truth* and disillusion. 3. The *calm* of conscientiousness and a well-grounded hope. 4. *Expectation* founded on a wise and holy trustfulness. 5. *Spiritual freedom.* "Whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed;" "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—C.

Ver. 2.—*Common burden-bearing.* The figure of calamity given in ver. 1 is that of emptying a vessel by turning it upside down. In national calamities all classes share alike. There is indiscriminate ruin. No distinction is made between the different ranks and conditions of life, though the idle poor are always the first to suffer. Illustrations may be taken from the great Lancashire cotton famine; or from times of trade depression which, as year after year passes on, reaches every class and section of society. "It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them or be exempt from them; whether men have little or much, they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner sort smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. Let not those that are advanced in the world set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be put upon a level with them" (Matthew Henry). The Apostle Paul advises that we accept the fact of burdens being common, and strive to turn the bearing of them into Christian virtue. "Bear ye one another's burdens." "Every man shall bear his own burden." It is as if he had said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, by kindly sympathy and ready help, as far as ever you can, partly because you have a very heavy burden of your own to bear, so you know what burden-bearing means, and partly because, come near to help one another how you may, you know from yourselves how true it is that every man must bear his own burden; the really heavy weight of it can rest on no shoulders but his own."

I. THE BURDENS THAT PRESS ON EACH ONE. The text suggests such as are special to times of calamity and distress, but we may treat our topic in a comprehensive way, so as to get direct practical applications. Each one of us has burdens as directly related to his sins and sinfulness as the woes of Jerusalem were to the national transgressions. The histories of cities and nations do but picture in the large the story of individuals. The cursory reader of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' will tell you that the pilgrim lost his burden from his shoulders when he gazed so trustfully upon the cross. But the more careful reader, who notes Christian's infirmities, and frailties, and stumblings, and falls, will tell you that the pilgrim bore his burdens right through to the end, and that they weighed him down even when crossing the stream. We have our burdens in our frail bodies—frail in the nerves, the head, the bones, the lungs, or yet more secret organs. Each one has a real "thorn in the flesh," which has influences far wider and more serious than he thinks. We have our burdens in our dispositions and characters—burdens of despondency, or of impulsiveness, or of carnality, or of masterfulness, or of vanity, giving a bad appearance to all our work and relationship. And the problem of our life is just this: "How true, how beautiful can we become, with that burden, under the pressures and hindrances of that burden?" There is divinely arranged a great variety and wide distribution of burdens and disabilities, both in the sense of infirmities and calamities, so that we might come very near to one another, and really help one another. As we meet and feel "I am a man with a burden," we look into the face of our fellows, and he is a poor face-reader who does not say, "And my brother, too, is evidently a man with a burden." Perhaps a suspicion even crosses our mind that our brother's burden is heavier than our own. Burdens, when rightly borne, never separate men from each other. The sanctified bearing of our own makes us so simple, so gentle, so tender-hearted, that we can bear the burdens of others, in the spirit of our meekness and sympathy, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

II. THE BURDENS THAT WE MAY BEAR WITH OTHERS. There are common burdens in the *home* life; common burdens in the *business* life; common burdens in the *social* life; and common burdens in the *national* life; and we properly think ill things of the individuals or the classes that isolate themselves, and refuse to share the common burden. But it will be well to ask how practically we can take up the common burden so as to really help our brethren who are in the common trouble? Our great power is our power of *sympathy*. We can come so near to our brother in his weakness, his

disability, even in his sin, that he shall feel as if another shoulder were put under his burden, and it felt to him a little lighter. We all yearn for sympathy; we all want some other human heart to feel in our trouble-times;

> "Oh what a joy on earth to find
> A mirror in an answering mind!"

But we can often enter, as a relieving power, into the circumstances that make the burden. The doctor takes the sufferer into his interest and care, and deals helpfully with the circumstances that make the burden. And every one of us can be a doctor for the moral difficulties and distresses of life. We have all more power over the circumstances that make trouble than we think; we can "lift up hands that hang down, and strengthen feeble knees." Beautiful in time of national calamity is the help which the poor give to the poor. Beautiful ought to be the help which each gives to each, and all to all, in the ordinary burden-bearing of family and social life.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The future for haughty folk.* "The haughty people of the earth do languish." The proud are an offence unto God. It is not the rich who find it so difficult to enter the kingdom of God; it is they who "trust in riches," who boast of their riches, who make their riches the occasion for despising others.

I. THE FUTURE IS AGAINST THE HAUGHTY NATURALLY. Fortune tells upon precisely those things in which they pride themselves. The picture of trembling, suffering old age, given in the Book of Ecclesiastes, is designed as a warning to the proud. See what you are certainly coming to who admired your fine persons, made so much of your independence, and pampered your appetites and passions. The picture of old age is not that of the ordinary man, but of the haughty, masterful sensualist, the sinner of the high places of society, whose iniquity comes back upon him. It is enough for haughty folk to live; life becomes their humbling and their chastisement.

II. THE FUTURE IS AGAINST THE HAUGHTY PROVIDENTIALLY. For they cannot win love. Everybody serves them in fear or for pay; and so, oftentimes, their very grandeur is undermined by those about them, their riches takes wings and fly away, their dependents take advantage of their times of weakness, and all are glad to see the haughty humbled. Striking illustration may be found in the career of Squire Beckford, of Fonthill. An insufferably austere and haughty man, the providences were against him. His mansion fell with a crash. His projects failed. He was humbled to the dust, and died almost a beggar.

III. THE FUTURE IS AGAINST THE HAUGHTY JUDICIALLY. For God must punish pride. It cannot be allowed to lift up its head. The Lord hath a controversy with it. Nebuchadnezzar eats grass like an ox. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen"—Babylon, the type of the haughty. Belshazzar sees the recording finger write the judgment of the proud. God will bring into contempt all the proud of the earth. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Time is on the side of the meek. Time is against the haughty. The judgments of God gather, like black thunder-clouds, against those whose hearts are lifted up. The storm will burst in the ever-nearing future. The haughty man's prosperity may blossom as a garden of delights; but God will breathe his blight upon it, and behold, as in our text, "the haughty people of the earth do languish." Then, with a true fear, let us "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*The necessary connection of suffering with sin.* "Because they have transgressed the laws . . . therefore hath the curse devoured the earth." The great Eastern empires had no staying power. In a few generations dynasties, even empires, were swept clean away. And the reason is not far to seek. The great Eastern kingdoms were founded on blood-shedding; and for the sin of violence God keeps the curse of destruction. A lesson which he taught the world once for all when he swept away the old violent humanity with a flood: "The earth never spues out its inhabitants until they have defiled it by their sin." This subject is presented to us under a variety of aspects, and with an abundance of illustration. It is one of the great messages of the Bible. We do but give it here a little freshness of form and setting.

I. SIN COMES FIRST. God always begins with Eden. The Eden of bright happy

youth in every man's life. There is no suffering where there is no sin. Thorns and briers come when man has acted in wilfulness. Suffering has no mission save as the corrective of sin and sin's consequences. Our first parents disobey, and *then* suffering comes. Man follows the "devices and desires of his own heart," and then the corrective Divine judgments come. And suffering has always this justification, that sin has come first. Illustrate in the case of King Saul.

II. SIN MAY HAVE A LONG TETHER. This often creates confusion in men's minds. They think the sin cannot be evil because the punishment is so long delayed. So the uncleanness of cities goes on for years, and seems to be no serious evil; but presently the plague comes and sweeps its thousands away. Israel presumed on the holding over of its national judgments, but presently overwhelming destruction came. We can often sin on for years with *apparent* impunity, never with real impunity. Storms are gathering, though they wait their time for bursting.

III. SUFFERING KEEPS SIN COMPANY ON ITS WAY. It is always present; always ready to give signs of its presence; always making monitions. It is held back only in the long-suffering of God's mercy, the "goodness of God thus leading men to repentance."

IV. SUFFERING PLAINLY STAMPS THE EVIL OF SIN IN THE END. As in the case of the drunkard, the sensualist, the dishonest. You can tell the value of a thing by its *wage*, and the "wages of sin is death." You can estimate a thing by its issues, and "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." This lesson the history of individuals and of nations, ancient and modern, teaches, but teaches in vain to the sons of men. We say, "Ah, yes! It may be true of *sin*, but it is not true of *our* sin."—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The distress of pampered appetites.* "They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it." There is, at first, a carnal pleasure in self-indulgence, in lust of eating and drinking, and in sensuality. But, sooner or later, God *takes the song out of it.* This must ever be the distress of mere appetite—it can excite, it can make ever-increasing demands, but it cannot satisfy. To indulge mere appetite and passion is to "spend money for that which is not bread, and . . . labour for that which satisfieth not." The young do not believe this; the old man knows it, and he says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!" and that judgment comes either in early death, or in bitterness and woe if life is long spared. Sir W. Raleigh on this ground solemnly warns his son: "Take special care that thou delight not in wine; for there never was any man that came to honour and preferment that loved it; for it transformeth a man into a beast, decayeth health, poisoneth the breath, destroyeth natural heat, brings a man's stomach to an artificial heat, deformeth the face, rotteth the teeth, and, to conclude, maketh a man contemptible, soon old, and despised of all wise and worthy men." And Matthew Henry says, "God has many ways to embitter wine and strong drink to those that love them and have the highest gust of them—distemper of body, anguish of mind; the ruin of the estate or country will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid." The distress of the men of pampered appetites comes in one or the other of the two following forms.

I. ABUNDANCE IS PRESENTED, BUT THE POWER TO ENJOY IS GONE. For appetite and passion wear out, after they have fixed in the soul a dull and dreadful craving that gives a man no rest. Late in life circumstances often give the money, the time, the positions which are essential to self-indulgence, and the man is in the midst of this unspeakable misery—that he is physically unable to enjoy. This is God's bitter punishment of sensuality in this life.

II. APPETITE BECOMES RAVENOUS, AND THERE IS NOTHING TO FEED IT ON. Or it slips away, always just out of reach, as the water to Tantalus. Every act of self-indulgence has a tendency to repeat itself. You cannot stop with *once*. But as the act is repeated it becomes more intense, it wants more force. The desire grows until it gets beyond a man, and nothing on earth can satisfy. Then Providence places a man in some captivity, like these pampered Jews, where there is the unspeakable misery of

immense passion for sensual enjoyment and nothing to enjoy. These are the two features of God's hell upon earth.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*The mission of remnants.* Explaining the figure used in this verse, Thomson says, "Early in autumn the olive berries begin to drop of themselves, or are shaken off by the wind. They are allowed to remain under the trees for some time, guarded by the watchman of the town—a very familiar Bible character. Then a proclamation is made by the governor that all who have trees go out and pick what has fallen. Previous to this, not even the owners are allowed to gather olives in the groves. This proclamation is repeated once or twice, according to the season. In November comes the general and final summons, which sends forth all Hasbeiya. No olives are now safe unless the owner looks after them, for the watchmen are removed, and the orchards are alive with men, women, and children. Everywhere the people are in the trees, 'shaking' them with all their might, to bring down the fruit. The effort is to make a clear sweep of all the crop; but, in spite of shaking and beating, there is always a gleaning left. These are gathered by the very poor, who have no trees of their own; and by industry they collect enough to keep a lamp in their habitation during the dismal nights of winter, and to cook their mess of pottage and bitter herbs." Reference may be to the few poor who were left in the land of Judah to till the fields, when the great mass of the people were carried away captive. God has always kept a remnant. Noah and his family in the time of the Flood. Seven thousand in the time of Ahab, an election of grace. And remnants have always their *witness* to make and their *work* to do.

I. REMNANTS WITNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS. They compel us to ask—Why are they thus but remnants? and so the Divine dealings are recalled to mind. There was punishment because there was sin; there was overwhelming punishment because the cup of iniquity had become full. The nation is destroyed as a nation because the world must be taught, over and over again, that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a rebuke to any people."

II. REMNANTS WITNESS TO GOD'S MERCY IN JUDGMENT. They say God's judgments are never absolutely destructive. God cuts down the tree, but leaves the stock in the ground. God removes the nation, but leaves a few to keep up possession and rights. Self-vindication is only a *part* of God's meaning in his judgments. Correction is his chief purpose, and his mercifulness calls for *repentance.*

III. REMNANTS WITNESS TO GOD'S RESTORING MERCY THROUGH JUDGMENT. For they only keep possession till better days, though their possession declares that the better days will come. The "election of grace" has this to say: "All Israel shall be saved." These points may be applied to the few that are kept faithful in times of worldliness and spiritual decay in connection with Christ's Church.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Man's duty in times of refining.* "Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the east;" margin, "fires" (Revised Version). The word translated "fires" in the Authorized Version is a difficult one. It points to the "land of the sun," which would be the east country, to which Judah was taken for its captivity, and which was to it as a refining fire; or some think to the "land of volcanic fires," which would be the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. We prefer to see a figurative reference to the refining fires of the time of exile. It is in strict keeping with the mission of Isaiah that he should thus bid the people "glorify God in the fires." Whether the passage directly refers to the flight of the people to the islands of the sea, or to the great deportation into Chaldea, the general truth is set before us that, when we are in God's chastising and correcting hand, our supreme desire and endeavour should be to "glorify God in the fires." And this is done—

I. WHEN THE SUFFERING IS RECOGNIZED AS CHASTISEMENT. Suffering is often spoken of as if it were accident, hereditary taint, or the fault of other people; but God is not glorified until we see and admit that it is fatherly chastisement. The burden of woe resting on humanity is overwhelming, unless we can see that God is in it, and thereby is but chastening his children betimes. The world is God's erring child. It glorifies the Father to see that he will not let him go on in sin. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

II. WHEN WE ADMIT THE SIN FOR WHICH THE CHASTISEMENT IS SENT. God always sends chastisements that can have a revealing power, and bear evident relation to particular sins. National sins are shown up by national calamities, bodily sins by bodily sufferings. This point may gain large and various illustration, as in Saul, David, Ahab, Jonah, etc. We glorify God when we let the chastisement show us the sin—act as the revealer to reveal the bad self.

III. WHEN WE DETERMINE TO PUT THE SIN AWAY. For chastisement then is shown to be effective; it reaches its end: God is seen not to have wrought in vain. Correction is "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his righteousness."

IV. WHEN WE COME OUT OF THE CHASTISEMENT PURIFIED, HUMBLED, SUBMISSIVE, AND OBEDIENT. Our Father is glorified when we are made children indeed. Beautifully is it said of the Lord Jesus that, "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Glorifying God by the spirit of sonship, which he kept all through the burning of the dreadful refining fires of Calvary. Trust, submission, clinging love, patient waiting,—these still glorify God in the fires.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*The burden of earth's transgressions.* "And the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it." Sin on man is often figured as a burden. Bunyan's picture of Graceless with the load on his back is familiar enough to be understood by all. Prophets picture God's impending judgments as a burden ready to fall and crush. We will here take the term as referring to the transgressions rather than to the direct judgments.

I. THE BURDEN THAT CRUSHES MEN. It is *transgression*, which is precisely this—*wilful sin*. "Sin is a burden to the whole creation; it is a heavy burden, a burden under which it groans now and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states and kingdoms and families; they fall under the weight of that talent of lead" (Zech. v. 7, 8). Illustrative cases may be given of the crushing of health, position, success, friendship, family, by the burden of wilful sin. Pressed down by it, humanity cries as did St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

II. DELIVERANCE FROM THIS BURDEN IS BEYOND MAN'S POWER. All kinds of purely human forces have been tried—self-struggles, strong will, education, philosophy, religious systems, legal enactments, watching of one another, refinements of art, etc.; but none have succeeded yet in doing away with the sin of the individual, and so none have even reached the fringe of the world's misery. Have we any better reason to hope for the success of the modern panacea of scientific knowledge, than our fathers had of the nostrums they tried? Before God intervened, there was "no eye to pity, and no arm to save." For "sin" man has never been able to find "balm in Gilead;" there is no adequate "physician" there.

III. MAN'S HELPLESSNESS SHOULD MAKE HIM CRY MIGHTILY UNTO GOD. "Thou canst save, and thou alone." Yet precisely in this men fail. They will die rather than turn to God for pardon and life. And why? Because they do not "know and believe the love which God hath unto them." False and unworthy notions of the God of love, and Father of Jesus, have long prevailed, and they keep men away from God. So our work is to preach the gospel of the grace of God, which alone can lift the burden of transgression that now presses so heavily, so crushingly, on men's shoulders, that they "fall, and cannot rise again."—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The Lord's kingdom is the doing of the Lord's will.* "For the Lord of hosts shall reign."

I. A KINGDOM IS SIMPLY THE REIGN AND RULE OF A WILL. That is the proper meaning of the word "kingdom;" it is the "dom" or rule of a king. There are several ways in which men may be gathered together into ordered communities. The form of the kingdom is the most common. We only in part realize what a kingdom is in our own land and times, because the relation between the will of our sovereign and the people is not direct, but is maintained through a constitution, which involves representative and responsible government. For the scriptural idea of a kingdom we must refer to the kingdoms established in those Eastern climes, where Bible heroes lived and the Bible itself was written. *There* a kingdom is the rule of one man's will. The judg-

ments, wishes, and commands of one man influence the spirit, conduct, and even choices of a whole people. Properly a kingdom is a number of persons agreeing to accept the will of one of their number as their rule and guide. The kingdom grows out of the family idea; and the family rule is the fatherly will. So the kingdom of God is no merely outward thing; it is the reign of God's will. The subjects of it are precisely those who choose his will, obey him, recognize his kingly rights.

II. IF WE KNOW THE WILL OF GOD, WE KNOW THE SPIRIT OF HIS KINGDOM. We can judge of any kingdom fairly if we can gain a fair knowledge of its king. Of God we know this—his will is that of a Father, a heavenly Father, a holy Father. God might have put forth his power and forced the obedience of his creatures. He does not. He appeals to our motives and feelings as reasonable moral beings. He wants no kingdom of slaves; he wants the love and allegiance of free men. His is a spiritual kingdom. To accept the will of some men is hard; but God touches our feelings, wakens our confidence, commands our reverence, and so to us his will seems most beautiful, ever right, ever wise, ever gracious. And we know the spirit of his kingdom —it is the obedience which love renders.

III. IF WE CHEERFULLY ACCEPT THE WILL OF GOD, WE REALIZE THE COMING OF HIS KINGDOM. Prophecy indeed makes pictures of the setting up of a king in Jerusalem in the latter days; but prophecy is fulfilled, over and over again, when hearts yield to God; when families, communities, and nations accept his will and reign. God wants to secure the voluntary choice of his will as the rule of life. Wherever that is gained his kingdom is set up.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

Vers. 1—12.—ISAIAH'S SONG OF PRAISE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM. As in ch. xii., after describing the first setting up of Christ's kingdom and the call of the Gentiles, the prophet broke out into song, through joy at the tidings he was commissioned to announce, so now, having proclaimed the final establishment of the same kingdom in the heavenly Zion, he is again carried away by the sense of exultant gladness into a fresh *Lobgesang*, which he utters in his own person—not, as the former one, in the person of the Church. His song divides itself into three sections: (1) vers. 1—5, a thanksgiving for deliverance; (2) vers. 6—8, a commemoration of blessings granted; and (3) vers. 9—12, exultation in the security obtained.

Ver. 1.—**Thou art my God; I will exalt thee** (comp. Exod. xv. 2 and Ps. cxviii. 28). To Isaiah the "Song of Moses" seems to have been a pattern thanksgiving, from which he delighted to draw his phrases when he was bent on formally singing praise to God. Compare the following: Exod. xv. 2 with ch. xii. 2, "He is become my salvation;" the same with ch. xxv. 1, "He is my God; I will exalt him;" Exod. xv. 6 with ch. xiii. 16, "Hath dashed in pieces;" Exod. xv. 7 with ch. xlvii. 14, "Consumed them as stubble;" Exod. xv. 11 with ch. xlvi. 5, "Who is like," etc.? the same with ch. xxv. 1, "Doing wonders;" Exod. xv. 16 with ch. viii. 13, "Fear and dread;" Exod. xv. 18 with ch. xxiv. 23, "The Lord shall reign." **Wonderful things; thy counsels of old are**, etc.; rather, *thou hast wrought wonders, counsels of old, faithfulness and truth.* The wonders for which God is praised were decreed in his counsels from all eternity; their accomplishment shows forth God's "faithfulness" and "truth."

Ver. 2.—**Thou hast made of a city an heap.** No particular city is pointed at. The prophet has in his mind the fate of all those cities which have been enemies of Jehovah and persecutors of the saints upon earth. **A defenced city**; *i.e.* "a fenced, or fortified, city." **A palace of strangers.** As the "city" of this passage is not an individual city, so the "palace" is not an individual palace. All the palaces of those who were "strangers" to God and his covenant have ceased to be —they are whelmed in the general destruction (see ch. xxiv. 20). They will never rise again out of their ruins.

Ver. 3.—**Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee**; rather, *strong peoples.* God's judgments on the nations specially hostile to him would cause some among the heathen peoples to range themselves on his side. Perhaps Persia is mainly intended (see ch. xliv. 28; xlv. 1, etc.; and comp. Ezra i. 1—4; vi. 3—12, etc.). **The city of the terrible nations**; rather, *cities of terrible nations.* Though the noun is singular, the verb is plural, showing that the word "city" is again used *distributively.*

Ver. 4.—The poor . . . the needy. The "poor and needy" are especially the afflicted saints, whom the ungodly of the earth have so long injured and oppressed. God is ever a "Strength" and "Refuge" to such (comp. ch. xiv. 30; xxix. 19; and see also Ps. lxxii. 12—14). **A Refuge from the storm** (comp. ch. iv. 6; and the Psalms *passim*). **A Shadow from the heat.** The idea is a little enlarged in ch. xxxii. 2. Its germ is, perhaps, to be found in Ps. cxxi. 5, 6. No writer accumulates striking images with such force and beauty as Isaiah. Primarily, the entire imagery has reference to what God will have done for his people when the final consummation arrives. Secondarily, a precious encouragement is held out to all who are undergoing their earthly trial and probation, who are taught where to look for a sure refuge in time of tronble.

Ver. 5.—**Thou shalt bring down.** The past foreshadows the future. What God *had* done in "bringing down" the enemies of his saints, he would do again and again. He could as easily bring to nought the clamorous uprising of heathen nations (**strangers**) against his people, as temper the sun's heat by the interposition of a thick cloud. **The branch**; rather, *the song* (comp. ch. xxiv. 16; Job xxxv. 10; Ps. xcv. 2; cxix. 51). The exultant chant of triumph which the ungodly are sure to raise as they deem their victory over the people of God complete, will be stopped in mid-career, and "brought low," or reduced to silence, by the crushing overthrow predicted in ch. xxiv.

Vers. 6—8.—The blessings of the final state are now touched upon, as a special subject for thanksgiving. They are not enumerated; but a certain number are set forth, as specimens from which we may form a conception of the general condition of the "saved." These are: (1) a heavenly feast, in which they will all participate (ver. 6); (2) a removal of the "veil," or "covering," which is in this life over all things, causing men to have an indistinct vision, and an erroneous estimate of their value; (3) the abolition of death, which will no longer hang over them as a thing to be feared; and (4) the cessation of tears, or the entire freedom of the saved from all sorrow.

Ver. 6.—**In this mountain**; *i.e.* the heavenly Zion—the "mountain of the Lord's house" (ch. ii. 2; comp. ch. xxiv. 23). **Unto all people**; rather, *unto all peoples*. There is no restriction of salvation to any particular race or nation—"Jew, Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, free" (Col. iii. 11), are equally invited, and some of each come in (comp. Dan. vii. 14; Matt. viii. 11; Rev. v. 9; vii. 9). The Church of the redeemed contains men and women of all "nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." **A feast of fat things.** It follows from many passages of Holy Scripture that there is something in the final beatitude of man which is best represented to us in our present condition by the image of a "feast"—something very different, no doubt, from the festive joy of which our Teutonic ancestors hoped to partake in the halls of Odin, but yet figured to us most fitly and appropriately by terms ordinarily used to describe earthly feasting. Our Lord tells of a "marriage supper," to which he will invite his friends (Matt. xxii. 2—12); and the scene of the "marriage supper of the Lamb," according to St. John in the Revelation (xix. 7—9), is heaven. There man, it would seem, will partake of a sacrificial feast with his glorified Lord (Matt. xxvi. 29)—will eat the "heavenly manna," which is "angels' food" (Ps. lxxviii. 25), and drink a spiritual drink which may be called "the fruit of the vine," deriving from this "eating" and "drinking" life and joy and strength. It has been already observed, in the Commentary upon Exodus (p. 581), that the sacrificial meal on Sinai, whereto the seventy elders were admitted (Exod. xxiv. 9—11), prefigured this heavenly feasting, and throws a certain light upon it. All gross and carnal ideas must, of course, be subtracted from the conception of the heavenly festivity; but it seems to be true to say that our author, and also St. John and our Lord himself, imply that in the world to come there will be a feast, at which God will be the Host, and all men, priests and laity alike, his guests, and receive from him the choicest and most exquisite gifts—gifts which will make them supremely happy (see Mr. Cheyne's note on the passage, p. 148). **A feast of wines on the lees.** Wine which remained on its lees, and was not poured off them into another vessel, was considered to be of especial strength (see Jer. xlviii. 11). Its defect was a want of clearness. The wine of the heavenly banquet is to be at once strong and perfectly clear or "well refined."

Ver. 7.—**He will destroy . . . the face of the covering.** According to some, the "covering cast over all people" is death, and the second clause of the verse is a mere repetition of the first. But, though the heads of criminals were covered when they were led to execution (Esth. vii. 8), yet death itself is never elsewhere called a "covering." May not the prophet have in view that "veil" or "covering" of misconception and prejudice, whereof St. Paul speaks as lying "on the hearts of the Jewish nation," and preventing them from discerning the true sense of Scripture (2 Cor. iii. 15)? Certainly one of the great curses of humanity while here is its inability to see

things as they really are—its coloured, distorted, prejudiced views of life and death, of this world and the next, of self-interest, duty, happiness. This "veil" is certainly to be done away; for "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known" (2 Cor. xiii. 12).

Ver. 8.—He will swallow up death in victory; rather, *he will abolish death for ever.* Hosea, a contemporary, was inspired to write, "I will ransom Israel from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction" (xiii. 14); but otherwise this was the first announcement that death was to disappear and to cease to be a possibility. It was an enormous advance on the dim and vague conceptions of a future life hitherto current (Job xix. 25, 27; Ps. xvii. 15) to have such an announcement made as this. Hitherto men had been "through fear of death all their life subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 15). Now they were taught that, in the resurrection-life, there would be no fear, no possibility of death. The joyous outburst of the apostle, when he quotes the present passage (2 Cor. xv. 54), is the natural thanksgiving song of reassured humanity, on recognizing its final deliverance from the unspeakable terror of death and annihilation. **The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.** A recent commentator asks, "What place is left for tears?" But surely death is not the only cause of human mourning. Our own sins, the sins and sufferings of our dear ones, are the main provocatives of our tears. When it is promised, as here and in Rev. vii. 17 and xxi. 4, that "there shall be no more pain, neither sorrow nor crying," the revelation is made that *there shall be no more sin;* for where sin is, sorrow must be. **The rebuke of his people shall he take away.** It will be among the lesser satisfactions of the final condition of the saved that they are no longer subject to reproach. In this life they have to endure continually reproach, rebuke, contumely (Ps. lxxiv. 10; lxxxix. 50, 51, etc.). In the resurreotion-life they will be exempt from any such annoyance. **The Lord hath spoken it.** God's word has gone forth. There can be no retractation. The blessings promised are certain to be obtained.

Vers. 9—12.—After thanksgiving for deliverance in the past, and commemoration of blessings in the present, confidence is expressed in the future. (1) The redeemed declare their joy that they have "waited for God," trusted in him, and looked to him for salvation. They feel that they "have their reward." (2) The prophet declares his conviction that the enemies of God's elect are henceforth powerless. They are personified under the name of "Moab," and regarded as still animated by sentiments of hostility; but their absolute impotency for working evil is insisted on (vers. 11, 12).

Ver. 9.—**It shall be said;** literally, *one shall say;* i.e. the redeemed generally shall thus express themselves. **We have waited for him.** During all the weary time of their oppression and persecution, the godly remnant (ch. xxiv. 13—15) was "waiting for the Lord," *i.e.* trusting in him, expecting him to arise and scatter his enemies, wondering that he endured so long the "contradiction of sinners against himself" (Heb. xii. 3), but content to abide his determination of the fitting season for coming forward as their Avenger, and now quite satisfied that he has avenged them in his own good time and in his own good way. **We will be glad and rejoice** (comp. Ps. cxviii. 24 and Cant. i. 4).

Ver. 10.—**In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest.** The protecting hand of God will ever be stretched out over the spiritual Zion—the Church of the Redeemed—to defend it and keep it safe throughout eternity. **Moab shall be trodden down.** Various reasons have been given for the selection of Moab to represent the enemies of the redeemed. Perhaps, as the Moabites were, on the whole, the bitterest of all the adversaries of the Jews (see 2 Kings xxiv. 2; Ezek. xxv. 8—11), they are regarded as the fittest representatives of the human adversaries of God. **For the dung-hill;** rather, *in the water of a dung-pit.* The image is, perhaps, selected with conscious reference to Ps. lxxxiii., where the psalmist prays that the "children of Lot" and their helpers may become "as the dung of the earth" (ver. 10).

Ver. 11.—**He shall spread forth his hands . . . as he that swimmeth.** Moab will endeavour to save himself from sinking in the water of the dung-pit; but in vain. God will bring down **his pride,** or *abase his haughtiness,* together with all the plots and snares that he contrives. A continued plotting of the enemies of God against his Church seems to be assumed, even after the Church is established in the spiritual Zion under the direct protection and rule of Jehovah.

Ver. 12.—**The fortress of the high fort . . . shall he bring down,** etc.; rather, *hath he bowed down, laid low, brought down to earth.* The past mercies of God in abasing the pride of the Church's foes, rather than any further mercies of the same kind, seem to be here spoken of. Mr. Cheyne suggests that the verse is out of place.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The place of thanksgiving in the religious life.* It is generally agreed by Christians that the religious life embraces a considerable number of separate duties of a strictly religious character. Among these the first place is ordinarily assigned to prayer; the second to reading of the Scriptures; the third, perhaps, to meditation; and so forth. But it is not always, or indeed very often, that a distinct position, or a very prominent position, is assigned to praise and thanksgiving. Prayer is apt to be made the staple of our religious exercises, thanksgiving to be huddled off into a corner. Yet, if we will consider the matter, we shall find that, on all grounds, thanksgiving is entitled to at least an equal place in our regards with prayer.

I. THANKSGIVING IS POINTED OUT BY NATURE AS A DUTY NO LESS THAN PRAYER. It is as the Giver of benefits that man seems first to have recognized God. Worship began with altars and sacrifices (Gen. iv. 3—5), which were primarily thank offerings. One of the earliest forms of religion was sun-worship, and the reason for selecting the sun as the object of religious regard was the manifest fact that from the sun man derives so many and such great blessings. Geolatry was another very early form of worship, and took its rise from the feeling that the earth was a nursing mother, comprehending in herself a manifold variety of beneficent influences. The very name "God" is probably a modification of the root *gut*, or "good," and was given to the Supreme Being by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, in recognition of his goodness in bestowing upon us so many benefits. The first religious utterances seem to have taken the shape of hymns rather than prayers (Gen. xiv. 19, 20; Exod. xv. 1—18); and hymns or psalms form the most antique portions of all rituals.

II. THANKSGIVING IS, EQUALLY WITH PRAYER, ENJOINED ON MEN AS A DUTY IN SCRIPTURE. If prayer is required in such phrases as, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17); "I will that all men pray everywhere" (1 Tim. ii. 8); "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1); "Pray one for another" (Jas. v. 16); thanksgiving is as frequently and as positively enjoined in passages like the following: "Give thanks always for all things" (Eph. v. 20); "I exhort that . . . giving of thanks be made for all men" (1 Tim. ii. 1); "Offer sacrifices of praises, giving thanks" (Heb. xiii. 15); "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6).

III. THANKSGIVING IS, EQUALLY WITH PRAYER, SET BEFORE US BY THE CHURCH AS A DUTY. The ritual of the Jewish Church was almost entirely one of praise. The Book of Psalms is the Israelite's 'Manual of Devotion.' Our own Church declares the objects for which we assemble in public worship to be (1) "to render thanks for the great benefits which we have received at God's hands;" (2) "to set forth his most worthy praise;" (3) "to hear his most Holy Word;" and (4) "to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul"—assigning to thanksgiving and praise the foremost place. The Eucharistic service is that in which Christian worship culminates, and that service is, by its very name, a service of praise. The embodiment of the entire Psalter in our Prayer-book is a strong evidence of the importance which our Church assigns to praise.

IV. PRAISE IS, IN ITS NATURE, A HIGHER RELIGIOUS EXERCISE THAN PRAYER. In prayer we approach God for our own sakes, desiring something of him. In praise we have no selfish object, but desire simply to honour God by setting forth his admirable qualities and declaring the reasons that we have for loving and adoring him. Praise is the enduring attitude of angels, who have (comparatively speaking) no occasion for prayer. Prayer implies imperfection, want, need, defect of nature. Praise is appropriate when all wants are satisfied, when the nature is no longer defective, when no need is felt. Thus prayer belongs to the probation period of man's existence; but praise will ring on through the vaults of heaven for all eternity. The cry in the heavenly Jerusalem will ever be, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy Name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 3, 4).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Hymn of praise to Jehovah.* I. THE PERSONAL APPROPRIATION OF GOD. This is one of the great marks of personal, spiritual religion. Other nations have known their gods as leaders in war, protectors of hearth and home; it was reserved for Israel and for Christianity to think of the High and Holy One as tenanting the heart and soul of the believer. Jehovah is not only "my father's God,"—this would be merely traditional religion; but "my God," "my Salvation,"—this is personal religion (Exod. xv. 2). The language of Ps. xviii. 28 and cxlv. 1 seems echoed here. The prophet becomes "choral leader of the Church of the future," of the Church in all ages. The echoes of all past ages gather up into one volume, and become a mighty prophecy of the future. The thought of the *faithfulness* of the Eternal enters into the appropriation of his Name. He is a covenant-keeping God. What he has been in the past is a pledge of what he will be in the future. "There shall never be one lost good; what was shall be as before."

II. THE INCOMPARABLE WISDOM AND TRUTH OF GOD. This, too, is a thought deeply impressed from the olden time. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exod. xv. 11; cf. Ps. lxxvii. 15; lxxviii. 12). This is seen in his counsels and in the execution of them. 1. His *far-reaching counsels.* God's thoughts are not extempore inspirations, accidental—"happy," as we say, springing up in no fixed order or method; they originated "long ago" (ch. xxii. 11; xxxvii. 26). To God nothing is sudden or unforeseen; though to us it may seem "the unexpected always happens." All things were ordained by him before the foundation of the world (Acts xv. 18). "All the wonders which happen contrary to the expectation of men are the result of that regular order which God maintains in governing the world, arranging all things from the beginning to the end. Now, since we do not understand these secret decrees, and our powers of understanding cannot rise so high, our attention must therefore be directed to the manifestation of them; for they are concealed from us, and exceed our comprehension, till the Lord reveal them by his Word, in which he accommodates himself to our weakness; for his decree is unsearchable" (Calvin). 2. *The faithful realization of them in history.* The imperial city, the city of Israel's oppressors (ch. xxiv. 10), is destroyed. It has become a ruinous heap of stones; and the palace of the barbarians will never again rise out of those ruins. It is symbolic in its fate of heathen pride and power and superstition, and all that exalts itself against the true God and the true religion.

III. THE EFFECT OF HIS JUDGMENTS ON THE HEATHEN. They will honour the mighty God of Israel. They will be converted from rudeness and wildness to meekness and lowly reverence. The former oppressors will bow in fear before him. "They are affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven" (Rev. xi. 13). For in great crises, in days of judgment, the nature of Jehovah and his rule is made manifest to men. The calm, unbroken smile of the summer day does not so reveal God to us in his power and beneficence as the thunder and the lightning, followed by the refreshing rain. Revolutions awaken the slumbering consciences of the nation; and God is revealed, not only by the objects and institutions he overthrows, but by those which are protected and fostered in the midst of and by the very means of change. He is seen to have been, in the magnificent imagery of the prophet, "a fortress to the weak, a fortress to the poor in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat" (cf. ch. xxx. 3; iv. 6; xxxii. 2; xvi. 3). As he can quell the fiery heat by bringing up a shady thicket of clouds (Jer. iv. 29; Exod. xix. 9; Ps. xviii. 12), or say to the proud waves of the sea, "Thus far, and no further!" so did he dispel the thundering hordes of the assailants of his people. So in later times did he meet the "blast of threats and slaughter" (Acts ix. 1) from the mouth of an arch-persecutor, and turn, by his mighty and merciful self-manifestation, that arch-persecutor into an arch-apostle. And to the infant Church he became what is described in ver. 4. Behind the providence which "frowns," the "smiling face" is ever hidden.

IV. THE ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION. In this mountain of Zion, where the prophet dwells, the seat of the Divine presence, a feast of fat things, with wines on the lees well strained, will be made for all peoples. They will be incorporated into the kingdom of

Jehovah; many having come from east and west, and north and south, to sit down in the kingdom of God. The feast is symbolic of all *spiritual* and *temporal blessings*, as it is in the parables of our Saviour. It is symbolic of *satisfaction*: "The meek shall eat and be satisfied" (Ps. xxii. 26). The allusion may be to the thank or peace offering: "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness" (Jer. xxxi. 14; cf. Lev. vii. 31). The meal which followed the sacrifice was a joyous and festive occasion. It was expected by the Jews that the glorious Messianic time would be ushered in by a great feast; and of this, doubtless, the guest at the dinner-table of the Pharisee was thinking when he exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" As the feast, so the age, of the Messiah is to be unending. And in one great burst of universal joy, death and sorrow are to be swallowed up. Death is signified by the covering or veil cast over all nations, or web woven over them. The covered head is a sign of mourning in antiquity in general; it will be withdrawn (Ps. xxi. 10; lv. 10). Darkness and oblivion are associated with death; this will greatly give way before the light of Jehovah. The bondage to the fear of death will be broken, death itself will be abolished, and life and immortality be brought to light (2 Tim. i. 10; 1 Cor. xv. 54). The promise belongs to the Jewish nation (Hos. xiii. 14), and to all its believing members. All sorrow is more or less rooted in the associations of death; this too shall cease, and Jehovah shall wipe away all tears from off all faces. The reproaches so long levelled at the people in their world-wide dispersion shall be taken away. No more will the taunt be levelled at them, "Where is now your God?" (Ps. lxxix. 10). Sin will be eradicated, which has had its fruit in tears, in shame, and in death. "The new Jerusalem is Jehovah's throne, but the whole earth is Jehovah's glorious kingdom. The prophet is here looking from just the same point of view as Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 18, and John in the last page of the Apocalypse" (Delitzsch). The last point in the distant perspective on which the eye rests is the epoch known as "the day of redemption," the restoration of all things, when the old and corrupt order shall finally give place to the new, the confusions of time cease in the harmonies of the eternal world (see Luke xxi. 28; Acts iii. 21; Rom. viii. 23; Eph. iv. 30). A great poet, Burns, said that he could never read this passage without tears. It does, indeed, touch the depth of the heart, as it strikes the full tones of the eternal evangel. For here we have the gospel in the universality of its message ("good tidings of great joy to all *people*")—the fulness of its power to *satisfy* and to *comfort*, in the all-hopeful perspective of the future it opens up. "Let us, then, direct all our hope and expectation to this point, and let us not doubt that the Lord will fulfil all these things in us when we have finished our course. If we now sow in tears, we shall reap in joy. The reproaches of men will procure for us one day the highest glory. Having obtained here the beginning of this happiness and glory, by being adopted by God and beginning to bear the image of Christ, let us firmly and resolutely await the completion of it at the last day" (Calvin).—J.

Vers. 9—12.—*Song of the redeemed.* I. THE STATE OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE. They will be in the joyous realization of long-awaited blessings. A brief strain from their hymn is given—

> "Lo! here is our God!
> For him we have waited that he should save us;
> This is Jehovah, for whom we have waited;
> Let us exult and rejoice in his salvation!"

As "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," so the crown of joy is the recollection of past miseries in the hour of deliverance. And how it intensifies joy—the sense of having *waited*, of having ploughed and sown, watched and wept, with a view to the "far-off interest of tears"! And finally, to see and know that in this mingled experience one hand has been at work, one will has been guiding, one mercy mixing the ingredients of life's cup! "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself!" yea, but verily, also, thou art a God that dost in due time disclose thyself to reward the patience and faith of thy chosen, and to pour confusion on thy foes! On the sacred mountain the hand of Jehovah will rest, to protect his people, to judge his foes. Beautiful image! As a symbol of protection, cf. Ezra vii. 6, 28; viii. 18, 22, 31; Neh. ii. 8,

II. THE DOOM OF THE HEATHEN. Moab seems to stand for the heathen in general. Moab, as the proud foe of Israel (2 Kings xxiv. 2; Ezek. xxviii. 8—11), shall be trampled down, swamped, and contend like a swimmer for his life. But his pride will be abased; his strong walls be cut down, even to the dust. So that hand, which is outspread beneficently, like the canopy of the broad sky, to protect and bless the chosen, may be clenched in threat and for vengeance upon the wicked. There are two senses in which that hand may "rest" upon us—lightly, as the father's hand rests on the head of a beloved child, to express affection, approval, and the promise of aid; or heavily, to punish, to overwhelm, to "turn our moisture into the drought of summer." To listen to the voice, to submit to the hand of the Eternal,—this is the expression of genuine piety. To writhe and struggle and resist the pressure of that hand, to turn a deaf ear to that voice,—this is the expression of hardness of heart and impiety, bringing certain punishment in its turn. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!"—J.

Ver. 8.—*Christ's conquest of death.* "He will swallow up death in victory." Here the fulness of Isaiah's evangelical prophecy begins to break forth. In the fourth verse he has described Jehovah as "a Strength to the poor, a Strength to the needy in his distress, a Refuge from the storm, a Shadow from the heat;" and all this, he says, God has been. Human history will endorse the record. But *he will* be more to men than all this! Death, that dogs men's footsteps and darkens even their days with fear; death, that breaks in upon all dreams of perfect friendship and permanent joy; death, which, as invisible monarch, holds empire in so many breasts;—death itself shall be destroyed.

I. THE VICTORY CAME. It was not *then*. But the prophecy was fulfilled. Death had to bring its sacred spoils and to lay them at the feet of Christ during his earthly ministry. And when men wondered at his mighty power, Christ said, "Marvel not at this, for all . . . that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth."

II. THE VICTORY WAS COMPLETE. Death was swallowed up in victory. No province was left undisturbed. No delay intervened. No conflict occurred. Death knew its own Lord and King, and gave back at once its spoils. Thus we understand the words, "He led *captivity* captive." The very powers that once had held empire over men he now despoiled. And as in the Roman processions, the princes who once had spoiled others were now led captive at the chariot-wheels of a greater victor than themselves, so death was led captive at the chariot-wheels of Christ.

III. THE VICTORY WAS PERMANENT. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Now that Christ has risen from the dead, he has become the Firstfruits of all that sleep. The triumph of the Saviour over the grave was designed to give great rest and gladness of heart. "And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." It is immortal life that not only gives preciousness to friendship, but that gives relief from overwhelming tribulation. We sorrow, indeed, still; the hot rain of tears falls from the aching brain; but we sorrow not as those without hope. We comfort our hearts with these words of Jesus: "Let not your hearts be troubled. . . . In my Father's house are many mansions."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*Rejoicing in God.* Such words as these could only come from an enlightened mind. They would have been impossible to a heathen sage. The gods of the nations were beings in whom no right-minded man could rejoice at all, and their character could not have been painted in these colours. But the God of Isaiah, *our* God, is One for whom "praise may be continually on the lips" of the wise and pure. Our souls can "delight themselves in God;" for—

I. HIS ABIDING FAITHFULNESS. "His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (ver. 1). "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." What he has purposed and promised is sure of fulfilment. The lapse of time, the passing of centuries, makes not the faintest difference in the certainty. Heaven and earth may pass, but his promise *never* (Jas. i. 17; Heb. xiii. 8). We may lean all the weight of our hope on his Divine Word, and we shall find that we are resting on the immovable rock.

II. HIS PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Vers. 2, 5.) The powerful empire-city might boast of its antiquity, its defences, its soldiery, but its iniquity should receive its desert—it should be humbled to the very dust; it should be a heap, a ruin, a desert. The righteousness of God will assuredly be vindicated in time. God must not be judged as if a few decades were much in his measurement. Only wait his time, and when the cup of human guilt is full, the arm of Divine retribution will deal its stroke. Then shall the shoutings of impious arrogancy be silenced; it shall be dumb with shame (ver. 5).

III. HIS DIVINE COMPASSION. (Ver. 4.) When the raging tempest of human persecution threatens to overtake and destroy the humble and the helpless, then the pitiful One will appear on their behalf. A Strength to the poor and the needy, a Shadow from the heat, will he prove to be; as the saving cloud shelters from the scorching heat (ver. 5), so will Divine interposition deliver from the consuming fires of human wrath. And this gracious pity is not an unusual or occasional feeling in his heart—it is his constant attitude, it is his abiding spirit. In every age and in every land he regards the poor and the needy, the suffering and the down-trodden, with a peculiar kindness; he is always ready to shelter them in the pavilion of his power. Therefore: 1. *Let the guilty fear.* (Ver. 3.) What God has done in holy retribution he is prepared to do again, and will do again if heedlessness lead to impenitence, and impenitence to greater and more arrogant rebellion. 2. *Let the oppressed hope.* The destruction of the strong city of sin is the relief and the rescue of the holy. Not only the "strong people," but the obedient and humble people—the people of God—will "glorify" his Name (ver. 3). 3. *Let the redeemed praise God* for his righteous judgment and his merciful deliverances. "I will praise thee." Not only those delivered from power and bondage of the human enemy, but those who have been ransomed and redeemed from the tyranny and the slavery of sin. 4. *Let every man claim a direct personal interest in God.* By approaching to him, by communion with him, by reconciliation to him, by joyful engagement in his service, let each one of us claim the right to say with holy exultation, "O Lord, thou art *my* God."—C.

Ver. 6.—*Divine provision for the human soul.* In the vegetable and animal kingdoms God has made full and rich provision for all the wants and cravings of our body—for its revival, its nourishment, its strength, its enjoyment. In the gospel of his grace he has granted us the most ample and generous provision for our spiritual nature. In Christ Jesus, in "the truth as it is in him," and in his holy service, we have all we need for—

I. OUR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. Food, especially wine, is given to *revive* as well as to nourish. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish" (Prov. xxxi. 6). Many a human life has been saved by the restoring cup administered with a wise hand. The wine of heavenly truth is for a revival indeed. From him who is the "true Vine" (John xv. 1) comes that reanimating virtue which calls from spiritual death the soul that was about to perish in its sin.

II. NOURISHMENT. Food is, above all things, for sustenance. We partake of the kind and welcome growths of the garden and the field that the waste of our system may be repaired, and that life may be preserved in its fulness and integrity. Without constant refreshment from "the Word of the truth of the gospel," if we did not sit down daily to the table which God has spread for us in his heavenly wisdom, our souls would soon fade and fail and die. As we eat of the "Bread of life," as we drink of "the river that makes glad the city of God," we find our life sustained; we "live unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

III. STRENGTH. "A feast of fat things full of marrow." That which is ample, not only to sustain life, but to augment its force. "Of wines on the lees"—wines that have acquired, and will presumably impart, *strength*. In Jesus Christ is everything to confer spiritual vigour, manliness, power. Communion with him, the study of his life and character, active service in his cause, the direct communications which proceed from his upholding, energizing Spirit,—all these minister to spiritual strength; they are all open to every disciple, so that the Christian teacher has a right to say, imperatively, to the disciple, "Be strong in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 10).

IV. JOY. Wine and gladness are closely associated in Scripture (see Ps. iv. 7; civ. 15)

Feasting and joy are also intimately connected. The provision which is made in the feast of the gospel is one that gives a purer, truer, more manly, more lasting joy; for it is the joy *of the soul*, and it is a joy *in God*.

V. ADAPTATION. The wine of this feast was to be strong for those who wanted strength—"on the lees;" it was also to be "well refined" for those who wanted the coarse flavour removed and desired purity as well as power (see Jer. xlviii. 11). The same Divine truth, delivered from the same lips, contained within the same covers, has *force* for those who need to be mightily wrought upon, and *refinement* for those whose moral perceptions are clear and whose spiritual taste is fine and cultured. There is everything on the table of our Lord to meet the varied cravings of these hearts of ours. 1. This is a feast which we are not at liberty to decline; for "the Lord of hosts has made it"—has prepared it with exceeding care and at great cost. 2. It is open to every hungering soul. It is made "unto all people." It is *free* to all. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," etc.—C.

Ver. 7.—*Spiritual veils.* Anything interposed between the eye and the object of vision may be called a veil; designed for the purpose of convenience or of modesty, the veil has often been the cause of unsightliness and inconvenience—it has been abused almost as much as it has been used. In Scripture the word has a moral significance, indicating something which intercepts the truth, and blinds the soul to the will of God and to its own duty and interest.

I. THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITUAL VEILS. They are those of: 1. *Credulity.* Often the mind freely accepts all kinds of irrational, superstitious errors, which coat and cover the truth of God, rendering it invisible beneath a mass of error. 2. *Prejudice.* Men who act as did the Jews in our Lord's time, determining beforehand and judging irrespective of the evidence before their eyes, making up their minds in advance of any facts or reasons which have to be alleged, are sure to miss their way. They cannot see through the veil of prejudice. 3. *Intellectual pride:* unwillingness to believe anything which our finite faculties cannot comprehend; practical forgetfulness that the heavenly Father must have many more truths that we can only very dimly discern to reveal to his children, than earthly fathers have to make intelligible to their sons. 4. *Worldliness:* allowing the interests, occupations, gratifications, of this world to assume a magnitude and importance to which they have no claim; and allowing the conventional maxims of society to pass current as heavenly truth, when they are only too often misleading and even deadly errors. 5. *Passion.* The false glare of passion hides from many souls the truth which otherwise they would see and by which they would live.

II. THEIR REMOVAL. God "will destroy . . . the veil that is spread over all the nations." 1. It is a blessed fact, in the far future, which God will establish. By means he is now employing, and perhaps by ways and methods of which we may have no conception now, he will bring it to pass; the day will come when the nations shall walk in the light of the Lord; both Jew (2 Cor. iii. 16) and Gentile (ch. lx. 3). 2. We may contribute our share toward this happy issue: there are mental errors and spiritual delusions which we can help to expose, both by enlightening words and convincing action. 3. We are bound to make every effort to put away whatever veil may be over our own eyes. Unconscious spiritual blindness is *sin* (see John ix. 41). It may be in part a man's misfortune, but it is partly his fault. There may be that which palliates it, but nothing will *excuse* it. We must betake ourselves to God (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24).—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The evening of expectation.* Of this passage we may look at—

I. ITS PRIMARY HISTORICAL APPLICATION. (See Exposition.)

II. ITS APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The Church of Christ is "the Israel of God," and we may expect much of the language first used in reference to the Jewish nation to be appropriate to it and even intended for its service. Like ancient Israel, the Church has found itself in great humiliation and distress, and has been in sore need of Divine comfort in its dark days. At many stages in its history the Church has felt itself oppressed with heavy burdens, beset with serious difficulties, threatened with great calamities; and then the blessed promise of deliverance has dawned, and its

heart has been elated, and such words of joyful praise as these in the text have been upon its lips. Even when there are no signs of the coming of Christ in delivering and reviving power, the Church may "take heart of grace" if it be (1) faithful in word and in deed to its Master's charge; (2) prayerfully and patiently expectant, waiting on him in reverent confidence; mindful of the fact that our ways are not always his ways, nor our chosen times his times. This holy and rightful attitude will turn the night of sorrow into the evening of expectation; and in due time will come the morning of deliverance; this will include (1) *the removal of reproach*—"The rebuke of his people will he take away;" (2) *the cessation of spiritual distress*—he "will wipe away tears," etc., the tears of a Christ-like sympathy and regret (see Ps. cxix. 136; Jer. ix. 1; Luke xix. 41); (3) *a joyous participation in the exaltation of Christ* and the establishment of his kingdom—"Rejoice in his salvation."

III. ITS APPLICATION TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. Our Christian life presents various aspects according to the path by which our Lord leads us home. The life of some may be characterized as that of abounding privilege, of others as that of multiplied mercies, of others as that of honourable and useful activity; in these cases the heavenly kingdom may appear to be a *continued though an exalted* experience in another sphere. But in other instances human life is one of unflagging toil, or of unceasing struggle, or of oppressive care, or of crushing sorrow: the night for which weeping endures (Ps. xxx. 5) is all but lifelong. It is in such cases as these that we are "saved by hope." Hope is the morning star which is a blessed promise of an eternal day. It turns the night of weary trouble into the evening of holy expectation; it puts a song of joy even into the lips of suffering; it calmly but eagerly "prevents" the approaching morning; it anticipates the hour when the tears of sorrow will be wiped away from eyes that will weep no more for ever, when every burden will fall from every heavy-laden shoulder, when the heart will be "exceeding glad" in the joy of God's great salvation. Let the children of affliction comfort themselves with these words of the prophet; but let them (1) be well assured that they *are* the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and that their title is good to the heavenly heritage; (2) wait patiently for Christ's appearing. If they would say, "We will be glad . . . in his salvation," they must be able to say, "We have waited for him."—C.

Ver. 8.—*The supreme victory.* "He will swallow up death in victory." The terms of the text are not satisfied by anything less than the gospel of the grace of God; that, and that alone, can be truly said to swallow up death. It is only Jesus Christ who can be said to have "abolished death" (2 Tim. i. 10). This is the supreme victory. Great conquests have been gained in other fields: in geographical research—discovery of America, penetration of Africa, etc.; in the useful arts—printing, telegraphy, steam-power, etc.; in mathematical science; in historical exploration, etc. These things, and such things as these, have conferred dignity on our nature and enlargement on our life. But there is one victory compared with which even these are small—the *triumph over death.* Death has been thought of and written about everywhere as the great conqueror, before whose prevailing arm all human forces go down vanquished to the dust. It has been acknowledged to be the master of our humanity. But in the gospel of Jesus Christ death is defied, is met face to face, is overcome, is so utterly subdued and routed that we can truly say that it is "swallowed up in victory." In Christ there is a double defeat of its power; for in him is—

I. ABUNDANT SPIRITUAL LIFE HERE. Sin has led man down to moral and spiritual death; they that live apart from God are "dead while they live," for they move on toward the grave, missing all those things which give nobility, excellency, beauty, real and lasting joy to human life. But *to know God in Christ Jesus is life* (John xvii. 3). And whoso enters into all the fulness of the life which is in Christ has that life "*more abundantly*" (John x. 10). Spiritual death is lost in largeness and fulness of spiritual life—life in God, with God, for God; it is swallowed up in victory.

II. IMMORTAL LIFE IN THE HEAVENLY WORLD. Here we have *the* significance of the words of the text. Other faiths beside that of Jesus Christ have included a promise of life in the future; but the hopes they have held out have been uncertain, vague, illusory; the life they have promised has been shadowy, unreal, unattractive. Their disciples must have felt that in its contest with death the faith has met its match, and,

if it has not been actually worsted, it has failed to triumph. In the gospel of Christ we have a decided and delightful contrast to this. There the victory is complete. We pass away, indeed, from earth, from its scenes, its engagements, its friendships, its joys; but we pass into a state and a world where everything is immeasurably better than the present. 1. We are unclothed in body, but we are clothed upon with a house which is from heaven (2 Cor. v. 4). 2. The ignorance of earthly twilight we exchange for the full knowledge of the celestial day (1 Cor. xiii. 12). 3. From the broken delights and the fatiguing toils of time we pass to the tearless happiness and to the untiring activities of eternity. 4. The sorrowful separations of the present will make more blessed the union where we "clasp inseparable hands" in unfading friendship. 5. The apparent absence of the heavenly Father will be lost in the conscious nearness which will make us to dwell continually in his holy presence, God with us and we with him for ever. Death will be "swallowed up in victory." (1) It will be long before we shall meet with a faith which will offer us greater things than these. (2) How sad, how foolish, how guilty, to remain spiritually, and therefore essentially, apart from him in the knowledge and service of whom stands eternal life!—C.

Ver. 1.—*Personal rights in God.* "O Lord, thou art *my* God." The difference between the "man" and the "godly man" may be seen in this. The man says, "O Lord, thou art God;" but the godly man says, "O Lord, thou art *my* God." The difference is the matter of conscious personal relation; it is a question of "appropriation." At first sight it might seem to detract from the august majesty of the Divine Being that any single individual should call him "mine." But, whatever we may make of it, the fact must be admitted that, while God's revelation to man in nature is to man as a whole—to man as a race the revelation of God to man in a book, and in a person, is a constant encouragement to him to recognize and come into the joy of personal relations. This point may be variously illustrated.

I. THE EARLIEST REVELATION OF GOD TO THE RACE AS MORAL BEINGS PERMITTED PERSON RELATIONS. This is shown in God's *trusting* Adam and Eve; also in his holding the communion of friendship with them, "walking in the garden;" and much may be made of the assertion in Luke's genealogy, "the son of Adam, *which was the son of God*" (Luke iii. 38).

II. THE PATRIARCHS LIVED IN THE JOY OF PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH GOD. Illustrated in Abraham's familiarity in intercession for Sodom; indicated in the fact of covenant; and proved in the distinctness with which God is spoken of as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

III. THE DELIVERANCES AND REDEMPTIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL SHOW AN IMMEDIATE AND PERSONAL INTEREST IN THEM ON THE PART OF GOD. One instance is suggestive of many. On the further shores of the Red Sea Moses put a song of thanksgiving into the mouths of the people, and this is its opening verse: "The Lord is *my* Strength and Song, and he is become *my* Salvation: he is *my* God."

IV. WHEN PERSONAL GODLINESS FINDS EXPRESSION WE SEE THE SIGNS OF THE PERSONAL APPROPRIATION. (See Ps. cxviii. 28; cxlv. 1.)

V. THE FULL REVELATION OF GOD TO MAN IN CHRIST JESUS IS PERMISSION AND INVITATION TO COME INTO PERSONAL RELATIONS. That is the revelation of God as a Father, a word which involves our individual rights in him as his sons. That is the revelation of a salvation which restores broken relations and renews our rights in God. But it is precisely in this appropriation of God that men are so often hindered. Many can admit that "Jesus died for the sins of the world," and "God loved the world;" but there is no life, no joy, no right sense of relation, until we can say, "God loves *me*, *even me*; and Jesus died for *me*, *even me*."—R. T.

Ver. 1.—*The true reading of the Divine dealings.* "Thou hast done wonderful things, even counsels of old, in faithfulness and truth" (Revised Version). When we can read aright, the Divine plan and workings in the olden times are not merely wonderful, causing surprise at the Divine wisdom and power; the great thing about them is seen to be their goodness, adaptation, mercifulness, and truth to promise and pledge. This is the result of a true reading of history, and many of us have found this to follow our right and worthy reading of our own lives, and of God's ways with us. Now we can say, "Not

one good thing hath failed us of all that the Lord our God hath promised." "All the operations of providence are according to God's eternal counsels (and those faithfulness and truth itself), all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season."

I. WE OFTEN MISTAKE GOD'S PURPOSE WHILE IT IS BEING WROUGHT OUT. As we might mistake any work in progress. Because we do not know the mind of the Worker; because his ways are other than our ways; because he uses strange agents and agencies; and because he purposely holds from our view his meaning, so that he may encourage patience, waiting, and trust.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain."

Illustrate by the apparent confusion in the ground where a cathedral is being erected; and show how great a mistake we should make about God's purpose in Joseph or David, if we took only isolated parts and incidents of their lives for study. We often mistake God's meaning when we try to read only *parts* of our own lives.

II. WE SHALL NOT MISTAKE GOD'S PURPOSE WHEN WE SEE IT IN ITS ISSUES. That is true. God's end always explains and justifies his means. But then the end is *not yet*; it is often away in the future, out of our vision. And we want some indication of God now. All we can have is the vindication, given over and over again, in history. We have "seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." And we have good argument and well-grounded faith that God's counsels are always "faithfulness and truth."

III. WE NEED NEVER MISTAKE GOD'S DEALINGS OR GOD'S PURPOSE IF WE WILL READ THEM IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT WE KNOW OF GOD HIMSELF. Life for us all may be full of puzzling things, but we can always say, "We know God." It must be right, it must be wise, it must be good, it must be for the absolute best, since *he* has done it, who, being *love*, must be "making all things work together for good." True reading is reading in the light of what we know God to be.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God our Shadow.* "For thou hast been . . . a Shadow from the heat." The prophet sees, in God's mercifulness to his people, a reason why the nations around, the masses of the people, should *fear* him. We can understand why the word "fear" is employed. God's deliverings and defendings of his people involve judgments on the great kingdoms that were oppressing Israel; and judgments are striking and impressive to masses of people, who must act upon fear rather than upon love, or even upon a sense of duty, for they are like children who are only learning the superior power of moral motives, and meanwhile must be subject to force, and put into right ways. The figures in this verse are very forcible. The "storm" is in the original a "storm which overthrows a wall," or a storm so violent that it sweeps down walls before it (Matthew Arnold). In Eastern countries the value of a shade from the blazing sunshine is well understood; and Thomson tells of a terrible heated day when he escaped from the burning highway into a dark vaulted room at the lower Beth-horon, and realized what Isaiah pictured. Another traveller says, "About midday, when the heat was very oppressive, a small cloud, scarcely observable by the eye, passed over the disc of the burning sun. Immediately the intense heat abated, a gentle breeze sprang up, and we felt refreshed." As a figure for God this may be variously applied and illustrated. We suggest three lines of illustration.

I. GOD IN HISTORY HAS OFTEN PROVED A SHADOW. Points may be obtained from such reviews of history as are given in Ps. cv.; cvi.; cvii. The key-note is, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses."

II. GOD NEEDS TO BE A SHADOW IN OUR TIMES OF PROSPERITY. For then all that is good and great in us is in grave danger of being burned up in the blazing heat. Few of us can stand long in the sun of prosperity. Woe unto us when all men speak well of us! and woe unto us when all things go well with us! It is most gracious in God that he flings his shadow across, and gives us times of quietness and peace; humbling times they must be, when self is put down from his boastful place.

III. GOD IS SURE TO BE A SHADOW IN OUR TIMES OF ADVERSITY. So David found, and when new trouble came he could say, "I flee unto thee to hide me." Our earthly

anxieties come in part from *circumstances*, in part from *enemies*, and in part from our own *evil selves*. It may be shown that, for each kind of trouble, the only true shelter is in God. Close with this idea—where the shadow is, God, who throws it, must be near; then, if we keep well within the shadow, we must be close to God, and so quiet and safe.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Jehovah's feast after reconciliation.* The picture in this text is based upon the familiar custom in Judaism of associating a sacrificial feast with a thank offering or peace offering. Such feasts were highly festive and joyous occasions. As an instance of the custom, reference may be made to the scene of the anointing of King Saul. Samuel made a feast, after sacrifice, to which some thirty persons were bidden (1 Sam. ix. 19, 22). "According to the Mosaic Law, the fat pieces of the victim were to be devoted to Jehovah immediately by burning, and the next best piece, the breast, mediately by giving it to his servants the priests;" the rest was a foundation for a feast in which the offerers shared. The "wines on the lees" are those kept long, that have become old and mellowed. "Full of marrow" indicates superior quality. The first reference may be to the joy of the returned captives when God permitted a revival of Jerusalem; but the full reference must be to the spiritual provisions of Messianic times. For "feasts" as the figure for spiritual blessings, gospel provisions, comp. Ps. xxii. 26—29; ch. lv. 1—5; Matt. viii. 11; xxv. 1; Luke xiii. 28, 29; xiv. 15—24. Keeping to the idea of feast after sacrifice sealing the reconciliation, and working that idea out in relation to Christian times, we note—

I. GOD GIVES COMMUNION WHEN HE GIVES RECONCILIATION. The feast was designed to assure the worshippers that all separations and enmities were done away, and God was now in gracious and comfortable relations with them. In the East restored friendship is sealed by *eating* together. It will at once be seen how this constancy of Divine communion with renewed souls is sealed in the symbolic meal of our sacramental Supper. That feast keeps up the assurance of God's comfortable relations with us. We are the restored and accepted ones to whom God gives his friendship.

II. GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS FUTURE RELATIONS WITH HIS REDEEMED ONES. It is important to correct a sentiment which very seriously imperils right Christian living, but seldom gets shape in actual words. It is assumed that God is supremely anxious for our salvation, our "conversion" as we call it, but indifferent to what we are and do, if only we are saved. This modern modification of Antinomian error is met by the fact that God makes a feast for the redeemed, providing for them after redemption. God is the *food* for the soul's life, and that life he quickens.

III. GOD WANTS JOY TO CHARACTERIZE THOSE CONTINUOUS RELATIONS. Therefore is the festive figure chosen. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The redeemed of the Lord ought to march "with singing unto Zion." Depressions may come, but they may not abide. Our Christian life should be a glad feasting on the abundance God provides.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Triumph over death.* There is a first reference here to the restoration of Judah from its death-state of captivity, and to the wiping away of the tears the captives shed when they hung their harps upon the willows. But we cannot forget that St. Paul and St. John have put the richest Christian meanings into these beautiful and pathetic words (1 Cor. xv. 54; Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4). And life for a nation out of the death-state of captivity may well be taken as a type of the sublime resurrection of humanity from the grasp of physical death. Our triumph over death is assured; and foretaste of it is given in the conquest of the Lord Jesus over the grave. He is our Conqueror of death, and in him the propheoy of this text will have its large and blessed fulfilment. We read the prophecy in the light of Christ and of his work. And Scripture teaches us to regard the resurrection of Christ as a final conquest of death for us (Acts ii. 24; 1 Cor. xv. 21, 55, 56; Eph. iv. 8; 2 Tim. i. 10; Heb. ii. 14; Rev. i. 18).

I. CHRIST IS THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH ITSELF. It was not the design of Christ to destroy death altogether, and withdraw its commission to the human race. He left it still to bite, but plucked away its sting, the venom of its hopelessness, and the bitterness of its connection with human sin. We shall die, though Christ has

conquered death; but death is now only the messenger that calls us home—he is no longer the jailer that drags us to our doom. Dissolution, or translation, such as we have hints of in the cases of Enoch and Elijah, may be the Divine idea for unfallen created beings; but certainly death, as we know it, with all its attendant circumstances of evil, is the immediate result of human sin. Change of state, and change of worlds, may be death in an abstract sense; but death in fear, and amid sufferings, and under disease, and involving agonizing separations, and terrible with the black shadows of an unknown future; this death—and this is the death with which we have to do—is the penalty of transgression. "The sting of death is sin." Lord Bacon, in his essay on death, almost makes too much of the material accompaniments of it, and underestimates the moral feeling in relation to it. He says, "Groans, and convulsions, and a discoloured face, and friends weeping, and blacks, and obsequies, and the like, show death terrible. . . . There is no passion in the mind of man so weak, but it mates and masters the fear of death; and therefore death is no such terrible enemy when a man hath so many attendants about him that can win the combat for him. Revenge triumphs over death; love slights it; honour aspireth to it; grief fleeth to it; and fear preoccupieth it." But this is only true for certain individuals, and under various pressures of excitement. To most of us, and especially to those who are thoughtful, and oppressed with the burdens of humanity, death has aspects of great bitterness. Then in what sense can we think of Christ as the present Conqueror of death? The answer is this—He has conquered the death-dread in us, both concerning ourselves and concerning those who are dear to us. He has "delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And he has conquered it by fixing its connections with the *body* alone, and severing it, once and for ever, from all relation to the renewed and redeemed soul. "He that liveth and believeth on me shall never die." In Christ death is compelled to take rank with disease and pain, as the servants of God. Its masterfulness is destroyed; its dart lies broken on the ground.

II. THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH OUGHT TO RULE IN ITS STEAD. In Christ life rules, hope rules, goodness rules, eternity rules. Man may despairingly look upon his partially raised schemes, and say, "Alas! I shall die." But the Christian man builds on bravely and hopefully. He knows that beneath all the outward show he is raising a structure of character on which death has no power, and he says, "I shall never die." The difference that is made by our letting *death* rule our thoughts and hopes and endeavours, and letting Christ rule them, may be illustrated by the change wrought in the land of Persia, when Zoroaster proclaimed that Ormuzd, the Good, was the real ruler of humanity. When Zoroaster came, the religious instincts of the people were debased, the divinity worshipped was malevolent, the moral tone was low, the social habits were vicious, the land of Iran was overgrown with thorns and weeds; men were idle, negligent, like the surfeited inhabitants of Sodom, given up to sensuality; they thought of their divine ruler as evil, malicious, cruel; they had the crushing, despairing, disheartening sentiments which always follow the belief that death, the representative of evil, rules. Zoroaster brought back the old and lost truth that God rules—not evil, not death. Evil is subject to God. The good God is the God of *life*, and life is mightier than death; of *light*, and light triumphs over darkness. Ormuzd was the god of production, and if they would sow and plant and weed, they would be sure to win, under his benediction, a glorious triumph over waste and barrenness and death. We are not yet free as we should be from the notion that death still reigns. We have not yet opened our hearts fully to the glorious truth that Jesus, the conqueror of death, now reigns. Above everything else our age wants to yield its allegiance to Christ, ruling in *morals*, in *education*, in *literature*, in *science*, in *politics*, in *commerce*, and in *society*; triumphing *now* over all the forms of evil that death can symbolize.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Waiting on God.* "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Waiting on God. Waiting for God. Waiting on when all is dark. Waiting still, when commotions and troubles surround us. Bidding us wait for him, a way of the Lord's dealing with us. Making it hard to wait, a sign of God's severer dealing with us. And waiting sanctified to our soul-culture. These are subjects very suggestive to Christian meditation.

I. WAITING CIRCUMSTANCES. It was a waiting-time for the godly in Judah when Isaiah wrote. In their own country, luxury and profligacy were plainly bearing the country on to some terrible doom. In the nations around them the cup of iniquity was getting full, and overwhelming judgments were falling on one after another. Every man who believed in the covenant was put into silence and waiting. The scenes around him he could not reason out. Precisely what God would do with his people he could not know. All about him was painful mystery; he could only *wait*, keeping firm hold of the truth, faithfulness, and love of God while he waited. When circumstances are against us, the best thing we can do is *to wait*.

"Wait thou his time, so shall thy night
Soon end in joyous day."

The history of God's ancient people is a series of waiting circumstances. Through a long Egyptian bondage they were called to *wait* for the day of their deliverance. Surrounded with perils, they stood at the shores of the Red Sea, and were bidden to *wait* for the salvation of God. Crowded in the plain before the Mount of Sinai, the people failed to *wait* in patience until Moses reappeared. For forty years they wandered, *waiting* for admission to their promised land. In their first siege they must *wait* until God's signal for the falling walls. At last they must hang their harps on the willows, in the stranger's land, *waiting* the completion of their seventy years of judgment. And even to-day, among us, Israel stands in waiting circumstances—waiting while her land lies fallow; waiting while the times of the Gentiles are being fulfilled. While the story of that people Israel remains upon the records, all may know that God does a part of his work of grace in men, by placing them in waiting circumstances. What is true of the nation is true of her heroic sons and daughters: *e.g.* Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Simeon, and a host of others had to *wait*, and often wait long, for the fulfilment of their hopes. So we are still placed in waiting circumstances. There are often times when we can *do* nothing—we can only sit at the window, like the sailor's wife when the storm-wrack fills the sky, and the sea makes its moan almost to heart-breaking. Times when we are put aside from busy life. Times when our way seemed to be walled up, no door would open, no sign of the guiding hand appeared; we could only wait. But this is true, the circumstances are God's arrangement, and the waiting does God's work. Life itself is one great waiting-time. The earth itself is but in waiting circumstances (Rom. viii. 22).

II. WAITING ATTITUDES. 1. The attitude of prayer, using that word in its large sense of openness of soul to God; the outlooking, up-looking of the soul to God; the humble sense of self; the silent and the spoken cry for the light and help of God. The union of prayer with waiting lifts it from the mere dull and stricken submission of the slave, into the pleasant waiting of the child, who, being sure of the Father's love, keeps looking for the Father's time. Waiting work never becomes weary work, or bitter work, until we cease to pray. 2. The attitude of expectancy. Waiting ought to become watching, in strong faith and assured hope; watching like that of David, when he could sing out his confidence and say, "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime." Such a spirit the captives in Babylon might cherish. Flinging open their windows westward, as they knelt, they might see the temple arise, the streets of the holy city fill with busy people, and the walls encircle a delivered and independent nation; and with such expectations it could not be hard to wait, for God's time to bless is never more than a "little way off." 3. The attitude of keeping on in the ways of righteousness, whether we find them *pay* or not pay. Doing right, even if it does seem to bring suffering. Purposing that our mouth shall not transgress. If, while we wait, we faint in spirit, let us take good care never to faint from righteousness.

III. WAITING CONSOLATIONS. We may be quite sure that God is in the waiting. Nearer than ever to us in the hours of delay. If the waiting is God's, if it belongs to the mysterious ways of the Divine love, then even waiting-times are blessed. They are even a gracious agency for the culture of our souls; and oftentimes better things are done for us in the waiting than in the suffering times. The great lessons of the perfect trust are learned in the waiting hours; and "patience gets her perfect work."
—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Vers. 1—18.—A SONG OF THE REDEEMED IN MOUNT ZION. The prophet, having (in ch. xxv.) poured forth his own thankfulness to God for the promise of the Church's final redemption and triumph, proceeds now to represent the Church itself in the glorified state as singing praise to God for the same.

Ver. 1.—**In that day.** In the "day of God" (2 Pet. iii. 12), the period of the "restitution of all things" (Acts iii. 21). **In the land of Judah;** *i.e.* in the "new earth"—whose city will be the "heavenly Jerusalem," and wherein will dwell "the Israel of God"—the antitype whereof the literal "land of Judah" was the type. **A strong city;** literally, *a city of strength.* In the Revelation of St. John the new Jerusalem is represented as having "a wall great and high" (xxi. 12), and "twelve gates," three on each side. The intention is to convey the idea of complete security. In the present passage the city has "gates" (ver. 2), but no "walls"—walls and bulwarks being unnecessary, since the saving might of God himself would be its sure defence against every enemy.

Ver. 2.—**Open ye the gates.** The command is given by God to his angels within the city, or perhaps by some angels to others, to "open the gates," and let the saints march in and take possession (comp. Ps. cxviii. 19, 20, which seems to represent the same occasion; and Ps. xxiv. 7—10, which tells of another occasion on which the angelic warders were bidden to throw open the gates of the celestial city. **The righteous nation which keepeth the truth;** literally, *a righteous nation.* A people, made up of all kindreds and nations and tongues, which should henceforth be "the people of God." They are "righteous," as washed clean from all taint of sin in the blood of the Lamb. They "keep the truth," or "keep faithfulness," as under all circumstances clinging loyally to God.

Ver. 3.—**Thou wilt keep** him, etc.; literally, *the steadfast mind thou will keep in peace, in peace;* i.e. "in perfect peace" (comp. Ps. cxii. 7, 8). The writer's mind throughout the first paragraph of his "song" (vers. 1—4) "is running" (as Mr. Cheyne well observes) "on the security and immovableness of the new Jerusalem." All is peace and sure defence on God's side; all is trust and perfect confidence on the side of man. The first words of the verse may be taken in various ways—the above rendering (which seems to us the best) is that of Delitzsch and Kay.

Ver. 4.—**Trust ye in the Lord.** The faithful exhort each other to perfect trust, in the new Jerusalem, as in the old (see Ps. cxv. 9—11). **In the Lord Jehovah;** literally, *in Jah Jehovah* (comp. ch. xii. 2). **Is everlasting strength;** literally, *is the Rock of ages.* A certain refuge throughout all eternity is, no doubt, intended (see the comment on ch. xvii. 10).

Ver. 5.—**He bringeth down;** rather, *he hath brought down.* The redeemed praise God for his past mercies. He brought down in his own good time all the proud and lofty ones who exalted themselves against him and oppressed his saints, making cities desolate (ch. xxiv. 10, 12) and giving over their inhabitants to destruction (ch. xxiv. 6). **Them that dwell on high;** *i.e.* "that exalt themselves." It is not eminence, but pride, that provokes the Divine anger. The heathen judged differently (see Herod., vii. 10, § 4). **The lofty city** (comp. ch. xxiv. 10, 12; xxv. 2, 3). The "world-city" (as it has been called); *i.e.* the idealized stronghold of the adversaries of God in this world, is intended.

Ver. 6.—**The foot shall tread it down;** rather, *trode it down.* **The feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy;** *i.e.* the feet of God's people, the weak and afflicted of this world, trod down ultimately, or brought to destruction and ruin, the great world-power—not so much that they were victorious in an actual physical contest, as that they finally triumphed through God's judgment on the world-power, which brought it to nought, and left it for his people to show their contempt by trampling upon the smoking ruins.

Ver. 7.—**The way of the just is uprightness;** or, *the path for the just is straight.* It is one of the main blessings of the righteous that God "makes their way straight before their face" (Ps. iv. 8), "leads them in a plain path" (Ps. xxvii. 11), "shows them the way they are to walk in" (Ps. cxliii. 8), so that they are for the most part free from doubt and perplexity as to the line of conduct which it behoves them to pursue. If this is so in the present life, still more will it be the uniform condition of the just in another sphere. Then God will of a surety "direct *all* their paths" (Prov. iii. 6). **Thou, most upright, dost weigh;** literally, *O upright One, thou dost weigh.* The term "upright" is applied to God in Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xxv. 8; and Ps. xcii. 16. By "weighing the path of the just" is meant keeping it, as Justice keeps her scales, straight and level.

Ver. 8.—**Yea, in the way of thy judgments . . . have we waited for thee**; rather, *we waited*. During the long years of our affliction and persecution in the world, we waited in the constant expectation that "thy judgments" would fall upon our persecutors. We were not impatient. We knew that thou wouldst visit us at the fitting time. **The desire of our soul is to thy Name**; rather, *the desire of our soul was to thy Name*. During all the weary time of waiting, we longed for thee, and thy Name, or rather what thy Name indicates, thy own true self. In default of thy actual presence, we desired to have thee ever in remembrance.

Ver. 9.—**In the night**; *i.e.* "the long night of their affliction." The sentiment is identical with that of the preceding verse. **Will I seek thee early**; rather, *did I seek thee*. **For when thy judgments**, etc. It was not a mere selfish desire for the cessation of persecution that caused the righteous to long for the time when God's judgments would be manifested upon the earth, but a conviction that so only would an impression be made on the persecutors, and a certain number of them be induced to learn righteousness. A desire for the conversion of sinners to God characterizes God's saints generally, and none more than Isaiah, who is here expressing what he conceives will be the thoughts of the redeemed, and naturally judges their thoughts and feelings by his own.

Ver. 10.—**Let favour be showed to the wicked**. This is a further explanation of the reason why the righteous had so earnestly desired the coming of God's judgments upon the earth. They had felt that further mercy and long-suffering were thrown away upon the wicked, and "only did them harm" (Kay). When "favour was showed them," they did but persist in unrighteousness. **In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly.** Even good example does not convert the wicked man. Though he live in a "land of righteousness," where God and his Law are acknowledged, where true religion is professed, where the gospel is preached, he will continue wicked, he will "deal unjustly;" **he will not behold**—or, *consider*—**the majesty of the Lord.**

Ver. 11.—**When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see.** The original is more graphic. It runs, "Lord, thy hand is lifted up, [but] they see not. They shall see to their shame thy jealousy for thy people; yea, fire shall devour thy adversaries." God's jealousy "burns like fire" (Ps. lxxix. 9; Zeph. i. 18) in the cause of his people.

Ver. 12.—**Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us**; *i.e.* henceforth thou wilt give us an existence of perfect peace (see ver. 3), untroubled by adversaries. **For thou also hast wrought all our works in us**; rather, *all our work for us*. The "work" intended seems to be, as Mr. Cheyne observes, "the work of their deliverance."

Ver. 13.—**Other lords.** The saved had not always been faithful to Jehovah. Some, no doubt, had actually been idolaters, as many of the early Christians (1 Cor. xii. 2; 1 Thess. i. 9, etc.). Others had given their hearts for a time to other vanities, and turned away from God. Now, in the new Jerusalem, they confess their shortcomings, and acknowledge that only through God's mercy—by thee—are they in the condition to celebrate his Name.

Ver. 14.—**They are dead**, etc.; literally, *Dead, they shall not live* (i.e. return to life); *deceased, they shall not arise*. The power of the idol-gods is altogether passed away. It was for this end—therefore—that God had **visited and destroyed them, and made their very memory to perish.** How strange it seems that the "great gods" whom so many millions worshipped in former times—Bel, and Asshur, and Ammon, and Zeus, and Jupiter—should have passed so completely away as to be almost wholly forgotten!

Ver. 15.—**Thou hast increased the nation**; *i.e.* the "righteous nation" of ver. 2—not the Jewish people merely, but "the Israel of God"—who are to be "a great multitude, that no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Rev. vii. 9). **Thou hadst removed it.** This rendering gives a very good sense. It makes the redeemed pass in thought from their present state of happiness and glory to that former time of tribulation and affliction when they were a remnant, scattered over the face of the earth (ch. xxiv. 13—15), driven into its uttermost corners (ch. xxiv. 16), oppressed and down-trodden by their enemies. But it is doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear the rendering. Most modern commentators translate, "Thou hast extended far all the borders of the land," which is certainly the more natural meaning of the words. If we accept this view, we must regard the clause as continuing the idea contained in the former part of the verse—the nation is increased in number, and its borders are advanced—it is "a multitude that no man can number," and it has no narrower limits than the "new earth," which has been given to it for its habitation (Rev. xxi. 1).

Ver. 16.—**Lord, in trouble have they visited thee.** Here, at any rate, the redeemed go back in thought to their time of trouble. They remember that what brought them back to God from that alienation which they have confessed (ver. 13) was the affliction which they so long endured. Their present bliss is the result of their former woe, and recalls the thought of it. **They poured out**

a prayer; rather, as in the margin, *a secret speech*, or *a low whisper* (Kay); comp. ch. xxix. 4. The word elsewhere means "the muttering of a charm," but must here signify the "whispered prayer" of one in deep humiliation.

Ver. 17.—**Like as a woman with child** (comp. ch. xiii. 8; xxi. 3). Isaiah uses the metaphor to express any severe pain combined with anxiety. **So have we been in thy sight**; rather, *so have we been at thy presence*. When thou wert visiting us in anger, and laying thy chastisements upon us.

Ver. 18.—**We have as it were brought forth wind.** Our pains have been idle, futile—have effected nothing. We have not given deliverance (literally, "salvation") to our land; we have not effected the downfall of our heathen enemies. That downfall was God's work (ch. xxiv. 16—20).

Vers. 19—21.—THE PROPHET'S COMMENT ON THE SONG OF THE JUST. Having concluded his "song of the just" in a minor key with a confession of human weakness, the prophet proceeds to cheer and encourage his disciples by a clear and positive declaration of the doctrine of the resurrection: "Thy dead, O Israel, shall live." He then adds a recommendation for the present—a recommendation to privacy and retirement, until the judgments of God which he has predicted (ch. xxiv.) are shown forth upon the earth.

Ver. 19.—**Thy dead men shall live.** A universal resurrection of "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2), is not yet announced; but only a resurrection of the just, perhaps only of the just Israelites. The object is encouragement, especially encouragement of those whom the prophet directly addresses—the religious Israelites of his own day. It is enough for them at the present time to know that, whether the day of the Lord comes in their time or no, when it comes, they will have a part in it. The assurance is given, and is made doubly sure by repetition. The prophet does not say, Together with **my dead body** they will arise; for there is nothing in the Hebrew corresponding to "together," and the ellipse of *'im*, "with," though suggested by Kimchi, is impossible; nor is it likely that he intends to speak of his own dead body at all. He may, perhaps, call the past generations of just Israelites "my dead," *i.e.* the dead with whom he is in sympathy; or the supposed personal suffix may be merely paragogic, as Rosenmüller argues. In any case the two clauses must be regarded as identical in meaning—an instance of "synonymous parallelism:" "Thy dead men shall live; my dead shall arise." **Awake and sing**; rather, *awake and shout for joy* (comp. Ps. xxxv. 27; lxvii. 4, etc.). **Ye that dwell in dust** (comp. Dan. xii. 2, "Many *that sleep in the dust of the earth* shall awake"). **Thy dew is as the dew of herbs**; *i.e.* refreshing, vivifying, potent to make even dead bones live. "*Thy* dew" may be said with reference to Jehovah, for changes in the person addressed are frequent in Isaiah; or with reference to the people of Israel, meaning, "the dew which Jehovah will shed *on thee*," i.e. on thy dead.

Ver. 20.—**Come, my people, . . . into thy chambers.** As when a storm comes, prudence counsels men to seek shelter (Exod. ix. 19), so now the prophet advises his people to put themselves under cover during the coming tempest. His meaning, probably, is that they should retire into the privacy of communion with God, withdrawing from public affairs and the distractions of a worldly life. **Shut thy doors about thee** (comp. 2 Kings iv. 33; Matt. vi. 6). **For a little moment** (so in ch. x. 25; and again in ch. liv. 7, 8). God's estimate of time, we must remember, is not as man's (Ps. xc. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 8).

Ver. 21.—**The Lord cometh out of his place** (comp. Micah i. 3). In the Psalms God is represented as "bowing the heavens and coming down," bringing them, as it were, with him. Here (and in Micah) he quits his place in heaven, as a king quits his own country when he proceeds to take vengeance on rebels in another. The expressions are, both of them, accommodations to human modes of thought. **To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity**; literally, *to visit the iniquity of the inhabitant of the earth upon him*. **The earth also shall disclose her blood**; literally, *her bloods*; i.e. her bloodsheddings; the many murders committed by man upon her surface. Isaiah denounced "murderers" in his first chapter (ver. 27). Manasseh's murders were the main cause of the first destruction of Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiv. 4). The second destruction was equally a judgment for the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, "from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias" (Matt. xxiii. 35). Bloodshed "cries to God for vengeance" (Gen. iv. 10), and will be one of the main causes of the world's final destruction (Rev. xvi. 6; xviii. 20). **And shall no more cover her slain.** "There is nothing covered that shall not" in the last day "be revealed, and hid that shall not be known" (Matt. x. 26). Every murder, however secret, will be brought to light, and every murderer, however unsuspected previously, denounced and punished

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—18.—*Thanksgiving the employment of the saints in bliss.* The prophet, in this sublime passage of his prophecy, carries us with him within the veil, and reveals to us the very words, or, at the least, the general tone and tenor of utterances, which the saints make when they have passed from earth to heaven, and stand in the very presence of God. The words are, as we should have expected, mainly words of praise and thanksgiving. The saints praise God—

I. FOR THE BLESSINGS OF THEIR ACTUAL STATE, which is (1) one of complete security; (2) one of perfect peace; (3) one of the fullest and liveliest trust.

II. FOR HIS MERCIES IN THE PAST. (1) Towards themselves; (2) towards his enemies. Among his mercies to themselves they reckon (*a*) deliverance from the malice of their foes; (*b*) direction of their own paths; (*c*) chastisements which brought them back to God when they were straying from his ways.

III. FOR HIS GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTES. *E.g.* "Jehovah is everlasting Strength" (ver. 4); He is "the Upright One" (ver. 7), full of "majesty" (ver. 10) and "glory" (ver. 15); he is all-powerful (vers. 5, 11, 14), all-gracious (vers. 3, 12, 15), a sure Refuge in trouble (ver. 16). While the occupation of the saints in the heavenly sphere is mainly to praise God, they also confess before him (1) their rebellions against him while in this life (ver. 13); and (2) their impotency to effect anything important by their own strength (ver. 18). It is remarkable that the confession of weakness is that with which the song *ends*. Must we not conclude that humanity, brought into the presence of God, is at first penetrated by no feeling so much as by a sense of its own utter powerlessness and nothingness? "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 4), is the cry that rises to man's lips instinctively. Later on, he may forget self, and be absorbed in the contemplation of the High and Holy One, and be content to hymn ceaselessly the Revelation songs, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 10); "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. vii. 12); "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. xv. 3). Happy for him when self-consciousness disappears, and God is to him "All in all"!

Ver. 19.—*The doctrine of the resurrection.* The belief in a future life and a future judgment was held by the Assyrians and Babylonians from a time anterior to the departure of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees. A very elaborate doctrine of a resurrection was also held by the Egyptians from an extremely remote antiquity. The Jews, on the other hand, do not appear to have had definite notions on the subject until the period of the Captivity. It is, perhaps, possible to account for the indistinct and undeveloped state of the doctrine among the early Israelites by the effect upon them of their Babylonian and Egyptian experiences.

I. THE BABYLONIAN VIEW, with which they came into contact in Ur of the Chaldees, was the following. A life beyond the grave was expected; but the duration of this life was quite uncertain. Merodach, a sun-god, was the *Dayan nisi*, or "judge of men," and by his favour the souls of the just were received into a heavenly abode, where they enjoyed life and happiness ('Religions of the Ancient World,' p. 63). The wicked descended at death into an infernal region, where there was no enjoyment, and (apparently) suffered different degrees of punishment according to their deserts. Fire was, perhaps, an agent in their suffering.

II. THE EGYPTIAN VIEW was far more complete and elaborate. The Egyptians held that the soul was quite distinct from the body, and that, immediately after death, it descended into the lower world (Amenti), and was conducted to the "hall of truth," where it was judged in the presence of Osiris and of his forty-two assessors, the "lords of truth" and judges of the dead. Anubis, the son of Osiris, who was called "the director of the weight," brought forth a pair of scales, and, after placing in one scale a figure or emblem of truth, set in the other a vase containing the good deeds of the deceased, Thoth standing by the while, with a tablet in his hand, whereon to record

the result. If the good deeds were sufficient, if they weighed down the scale wherein they were placed, then the happy soul was permitted to enter "the boat of the sun," and was conducted by good spirits to the Elysian fields (Aahlu), to the "pools of peace," and the dwelling-places of the blest. If, on the contrary, the good deeds were insufficient, if the scale remained suspended in the air, then the unhappy soul was sentenced, according to the degree of its ill deserts, to go through a round of transmigrations in the bodies of animals more or less unclean; the number, nature, and duration of the transmigrations depending on the degree of the deceased's demerits, and the consequent length and severity of the punishment which he deserved or the purification which he needed. Ultimately, if after many trials sufficient purity was not attained, the wicked soul, which had proved itself incurable, underwent a final sentence at the hands of Osiris, supreme judge of the dead, and, being condemned to complete and absolute annihilation, was destroyed upon the steps of heaven by Shu, the "lord of light." The good soul, having been first freed from its infirmities by passing through the basin of purgatorial fire guarded by the four ape-faced genii, was made a companion of Osiris for a period of three thousand years, after which it returned from Amenti, re-entered its former body, rose from the dead, and lived once more a human life upon the earth. This process was gone through again and again, until a certain mystic cycle of years became complete, when, to crown all, the good and blessed attained the final joy of union with God, being absorbed into the Divine essence from which they had once emanated, and so attaining the full perfection and true end of their existence. With this elevating belief were mixed up a number of strange superstitions, not very easily reconcilable with the main creed, yet occupying an important place in the thoughts of the people. The soul, notwithstanding its transmigrations and presence in Amenti and Aahlu, was never at any time wholly separated from its body, but still inhabited the tomb, partook of the offerings left for it, and even had meetings and held converse with the souls belonging to other neighbouring bodies. It could at all times read the passages from the "ritual of the dead" painted on its sarcophagus, or its mummy-bandages, or the inner walls of its tomb, and could thus refresh its memory it at any time in its long journeyings through the lower world it failed to recollect at the right moment the proper invocation or prayer under circumstances of danger.

III. THE HEBREW VIEW. Coming from Babylonia into Egypt, with probably only some vague notions of an after-life, in which the inequalities of this life should be remedied and justice meted out to all, the Hebrews were brought into contact with the complicated and elaborate creed of Egypt upon the subject—a creed which filled the thoughts of the Egyptians, and dominated their whole life, entering into all their relations, political, social, and domestic. This creed was mixed up with all the intricacies of the Egyptian polytheism, involved acceptance of the Osirid myth, acknowledgment of half a hundred deities, and adoption, if it were accepted, of numerous superstitious practices. Whatever may have been the case with individuals (Josh. xxiv. 14; Ezek. xx. 6—9), the Hebrews, as a nation, rejected the Egyptian creed, viewed it as corrupting and debasing, and put it aside *en bloc*, without troubling themselves to sift the wheat from the chaff, the grains of gold from the mud and sand in which they were embedded. The rejection of the imaginative theosophy of Egypt produced a reaction in the Hebrew mind towards the material and the mundane. They seem to have left Egypt with less definite views on the subject of a future life than those which their ancestors had had in Babylonia. And in his revelations from Sinai it did not please God to enlighten them. Light was vouchsafed them gradually through the psalmists and prophets—by the present statement of Isaiah, by Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (xxxvii. 1—10) and the teaching which followed it (vers. 11—14), by Daniel's prophecy (xii. 2) already referred to, and otherwise, until, in the time of the Maccabees, their faith in the resurrection was as strong, and almost as full and definite, as that of Christians (see 2 Macc. vii. 9, 14, 23, 29, 36; xii. 43, 44).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The vision of future glory.* It seems best to take this as the picture of an ideal spiritual state.

I. THE IMPREGNABLE CITY. Its walls and outworks are "salvation." A great

word—negatively hinting deliverance from the enemy and the oppressor; positively including all the contents of sacred peace, prosperity, and happiness. But salvation is nothing without a Saviour; it is the loving presence of Jehovah who girds about Jerusalem as a wall. In Zech. ii. 9 he is spoken of as a "wall of fire." In another magnificent image, "Round about are the everlasting arms." The idea of the Eden-garden may be compared with that of this fenced city. A "garden walled around, a chosen and peculiar ground," may represent the mystical Church here, the celestial state hereafter. The city is created and fortified by the Eternal.

II. THE CELESTIAL CRY. The command is heard from heaven, "Open ye the gates!" As in ch. xl. 1, from the same quarter, sounds the gracious word, "Comfort ye my people!" The righteous nation that keepeth faithfulness may enter the Divine city. The emphatic thought is that this city is to be the scene of righteousness, in contrast to the state of "this world which passeth away." "Open to me," exclaims the psalmist, "the gates of righteousness: I will go into them and praise Jehovah; the gate of Jehovah into which the righteous shall enter" (Ps. cxviii. 19, 20). And again, in another sublime passage, "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. xxiv. 3, 4). This righteousness of mind and heart is the gift of the Divine grace. Purity in the human spirit is at once the reflection of God's nature and the condition of "beholding" him. If men are good and faithful, it is because their souls have kept walk and converse with the truthful God (Ps. xxxi. 24). And this they have only learned to do as the result of chastisement and the experience of the evil of other ways. "The Church was always like a barn (Matt. iii. 12), in which the chaff is mingled with the wheat, or the wheat overpowered by the chaff." When the Jews came back from captivity, it was with purified hearts; a large portion of the filth of idolatry had been swept away. And so universally; it is "out of much tribulation," much *sifting* on life's floor, that we must enter the kingdom—that the pure wheat of chastened character must be gathered into the celestial barn.

III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF JEHOVAH. 1. *The firmness of his purpose.* The words in ver. 3 are differently rendered: "a steadfast mind thou keepest in;" "firm is the hope thou wilt form;" "a purpose established thou purposest." And this purpose is one of *peace.* He "thinks the thought of peace" (Jer. xxix. 11). Hence the attitude of the believer is one of fearless and fixed repose; "He shall not be moved for ever . . . shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in Jehovah" (Ps. cxii. 6, 7). This being of ours, in itself frail, anxious, feverish, needs steadying, staying; and its only sufficient prop must be "Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (ch. x. 20). The essential thing in faith is habitual dependence; the result, *ineffable peace.* "Peace, peace," are the prophet's emphatic words. "He refrains from epithets; such peace is indescribable." So in ch. lvii. 19, "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." And the Christian apostle takes up the thought of the profundity and unutterableness of this bliss of the soul, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7). 2. *The constancy of his being.* Jah Jehovah is a Rock of ages, and may be trusted in for ever. One of the four places where our translators have retained the original name Jehovah, of which Jah is the abridged form (Exod. vi. 3; Ps. lxxxiii. 18; ch. xii. 2). The doubled name is used for emphasis, as in "Peace, peace," above; it expresses the perfection of his majesty, wisdom, holiness, which should reflect the utmost reverence and the most absolute trust in the mind of the believers. And "*Rock,* Rock of Israel," etc., is another of the sacred names of the Divine Being (ch. xxx. 29; see Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, etc.). *Actively,* to protect, to throw the cool shade of his protection upon the suffering of his people; *passively,* to resist the utmost shock and assault of his foes. The noble image of one of our poets, too lofty to be applied to mortal, may be applied to him—

> "As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
> Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
> Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
> Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Let us contemplate the nature of God; no other nature yields a lasting satisfaction and repose to the beholder. "As soon as we turn aside from beholding it, nothing is seen

but what is fleeting, and then we immediately faint. Thus ought faith to rise above the world by continual advances; for neither the truth, nor the justice, nor the goodness of God is temporary and fading, but God continues to be always like himself." 3. *His irresistible power.* He brings down the lofty and the proud. Bulwarks, armed hosts, enormous wealth, are of no avail against "moral influence." And when we thus speak, we mean nothing less than the just will, the fixed purpose, of the Eternal. No Babylon, no Rome, no empire built on force and fraud, need be a terror to the faithful. They, at the day of doom, must "melt like snow at the glance of the Lord," or be abased even to the dust. "We live amidst closing histories and amid falling institutions; there is an axe laid at the root of many trees; foundations of fabrics have been long giving way, and the visible tottering commences. 'The earth quakes and the heavens do tremble.' The sounds of great downfalls and great disruptions come from different quarters; old combinations start asunder; a great crash is heard; and it is some vast mass that has just broken off from the rock, and gone down into the chasm below. A great volume of time is now shattering, the roll is folded up for the registry, and we must open another. Never again—never, though ages pass away—never any more under the heavens shall be seen forms and fabrics, and structures and combinations that we have seen. The world is evidently at the end of one era and is entering upon another;" but the "Rock of ages" will remain, and the Church which rests upon him, "to enlighten ignorance, to fight with sin, and to conduct man to eternity" (Mozley). 4. *His just dealings.* A plain or straight path is made for the righteous—one free from obstacles and opposition, even as the path of the Eternal himself to the fulfilment of his purposes (cf. Prov. iii. 6; xi. 5; xv. 19). He is even said to make their path "plain with a level," *i.e.* to a nicety. It could not have seemed so to the Jews in captivity; and often it must seem, in the midst of perplexity and distress, far otherwise to the children of God now. Yet what seems to be a "roundabout" path in a mountainous country may actually be the shortest from point to point. So with the ways by which the Lord our God leads his children to the end. The direct line which haste and impatience would take is not really the "straight path" in the world of spirit. Here, when we seem to be turning back, we may be really moving forward; we may seem to be "fetching a compass," none the less certainly may be advancing by the safest and most direct road.

IV. Song of the Church. A meditation on the ways of God, and the relation of the believing soul to him. *Waiting for God.* They had watched, as it were, for Jehovah to advance along the great way of judgment by which he was to proceed to open the Messianic kingdom. *Longing for the revelation of him.* Oh that his Name and memorial (two expressions for one idea) might be known! The Name of God is God revealed, "the side of the Divine Being turned towards man" (Ps. xx. 1; cf. Ps. xxx. 27; lxiii. 9). (For the meaning of "memorial," cf. Exod. iii. 15; Ps. xxx. 4; cxxxv. 13; Hos. xii. 5.) *The Messianic hope.* The judgments of God, the thought is, must prepare for the new kingdom, for the reign of righteousness in the world. Calamities are symptomatic of evils needing to be cleansed away, if significant of the hand of Jehovah at work in reformation, and so prophetic of a new era. The reign on Mount Zion will be ushered in by a series of judgments on the unbelievers and the unrighteous, *i.e.* the heathen as opposed to the worshippers of Jehovah. *Those judgments are a necessity.* Righteousness is not learned, the need of it, the beauty of it, are not experienced, except in the school of suffering, of Divine chastisement. The effect of wealth and honour and success is not to lead men to God, and to the paths of rectitude and religion. Neither the Divine mercy, nor the bright example of others, nor the general tone of moral society, have sufficient influence to attract the inveterate sinner to better things. In vain the light is poured upon the morally blind, upon those who "will not behold the majesty of Jehovah." In vain his hand is lifted up in judgment; their insensibility prevents them from perceiving it, though they are acute enough in their observation of the trifling interests of the sensuous life. There is but one way of dealing with such insensibility. *Those judgments will be effective.* They *shall* see the jealousy of Jehovah for his people (cf. Ps. lxix. 9), for fire shall devour his adversaries. His jealousy is like fire (Ps. lxxix. 5; Zeph. i. 18). In consuming it purifies, in purifying it consumes (cf. Deut. xxxii. 22; Job xx. 26; xxii. 20). Remorse, shame, envy, indignation,—those fires within the bosom reflect the judgment of God; resistance, rebellion, impenitence, make them unquenchable. *Peace and deliverance for the chosen.* The past supplies

arguments of hope for the future. A work has been accomplished by the Church, but this is Jehovah's work in it and by it. The deliverance from a foreign yoke was his work also. They had been enslaved to other lords (cf. ch. lxiii. 18), and they had done as they pleased with Israel. But they have been swept away into the kingdom of the shades, and are forgotten. "From past events and benefits received, we should reason to God's future kindness, and infer that he will care for us for the future. God is not like man, to be capable of weariness in doing good, or exhausted in giving largely; therefore the more numerous the benefits with which he has loaded us, so much the more ought our faith to be strengthened and increased" (Calvin); cf. Ps. cxxxviii. 8; Gen. xxxii. 10, 12; Phil. i. 6. "Thee only." Under the dominion of Jehovah alone is peace, blessedness, liberty, to be found.

> "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves beside.'

J.

Vers. 15—21.—*The resurrection of Israel.* The population of Judah has been increased, and its borders extended. (For this cause of rejoicing cf. ch. ix. 2; xlix. 19, 20; liv. 1, etc.; Micah ii. 1, 2; iv. 7; Obad. 19, 20.) Probably he is thinking of the population and strength of the land in the days of David and Solomon, as typical of what is again to be in the happier times. But actually a period of gloom and suffering must precede the glorious restoration.

I. THE PERIOD OF TROUBLE AND EXPECTATION. It is a pathetic picture of the soul in its attitude of anxious suspense. Jehovah was missed and longed for as the Light which seems to tarry in the dark days of winter. Prayer was poured forth; and there was a period of acute suffering like that of the mother preceding the birth of a child. Hope was deceived and disappointed again and again (cf. ch. xiii. 18; xxi. 3). Still the land was not blessed, still the population was not restored. The prophet is thinking of the days after the return from exile.

II. THE RESURRECTION OF THE PEOPLE. "Thy dead shall live." "Sublimely recovering himself, the prophet cries that God's saints, though they are dead, shall live," and shall share the duties and privileges of regenerate Israel. The prophet sees, as it were, his countrymen returning from the under-world. So speaks Hosea: "After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight" (vi. 2); cf. the vision of Ezekiel—the valley of the dry bones (xxxvii. 1—10). With lively faith anticipating the event, he calls upon the new population to awake and cry. It is as if a dew had fallen on the barren land. This "dew of lights" is thought of as something supernatural, existing before the sun. In Ps. cx. 3 the ordinary dew is born out of the morning shower. "The dew from the glory of God falls like a heavenly seed into the bosom of the earth; and in consequence of this, the earth gives out from itself the shades which have hitherto been held fast beneath the ground, so that they appear alive again on the face of the earth" (Delitzsch). There is thus a connection between *light and life*, so often found in conjunction in religious thought (Ps. xxxvi. 9; Job iii. 16—20; John i. 4). For as the return of the morning light is coincident with the refreshment of the strength, and the awakening to new effort, so in all spiritual parables of the revival of the nation or the individual, light brings life. The *renaissance* of knowledge precedes or coincides with the reformation of manners, the stir of new activities, the beginning of a new era. And this connection should never be forgotten, "And God said, Let there be light." Even so; and the darkness of superstition, of prejudice, of obscurantism, must be symptomatic of moral death. As the light arouses the sleeper, so the sleeper must bestir himself to greet it and rejoice in it. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

III. RETURN TO SELF-COMMUNION. From this enrapturing vision the prophet returns to the present, with all its sobering and in part depressing circumstances. "He has gained on behalf of his people the comforting certitude that a great exhibition of the Divine justice is on the point of taking place; and his counsel is to withdraw from the doomed into the privacy of communion with God" (Cheyne). While the storm of Divine judgment is sweeping by, let the people of God betake themselves to solitude and prayer (cf. Ps. xxvii. 5; xxxi. 21; Matt. vi. 6). The opening of the door

of the prayer-chamber is in times of distress the opening of the door into another world than this—a scene of serenity and elevation. In the presence of our Father who seeth in secret, the problems of the hour are solved, or cease unduly to harass the mind. That which threatened to crush us is surmounted by the new energy of the spirit here imparted.

"Prayer ardent opens heaven, lets down a stream
Of glory on the consecrated hour
Of man in audience with the Deity;
Who worships the great God, that instant joins
The first in heaven, and sets his foot on hell."

And it is but for "a little moment" that the wrath will last (cf. ch. x. 24, 25; liv. 7, 8; Ps. xxx. 6). "Just as Noah, behind whom Jehovah shut the door of the ark, was hidden in the ark while the floods of judgment poured down without, so should the Church be shut off from the world without in its life of prayer, because a judgment of Jehovah was at hand" (Delitzsch).

IV. THE COMING FORTH OF JEHOVAH. (Cf. Micah i. 3.) Where is the "place" of Jehovah? It is the supernatural sphere; and every great manifestation of judgment mingled with mercy is a "coming forth of Jehovah." Here it is expressly for judgment to punish men who have incurred blood-guilt, which is, in other words, *sin*. Yet in the heart of judgment still his pity and consolation live, and we "should keep it constantly before our eyes, when the wicked slay, mock, and ridicule us, and inflict upon us every kind of outrage and cruelty, God will at length make known that the cry of innocent blood has not been uttered in vain; for he never can forget his own people" (Luke xviii. 7).—J.

Ver. 9.—*Seeking God in the night.* "With my soul have I desired thee in the night." When God's judgments are in the earth, even the righteous become more earnest. They need the quickening of spirit which comes from marking "the way," the sure way, and sometimes the swift way, of God's judgments. But the night must be taken in a personal sense as well as in a national sense.

I. WE DESIRE GOD IN THE NIGHT OF OUR SORROWS. Thick clouds come over the heart. We are no longer surrounded by bright skies and pleasant sounds. We have come to the wilderness side of life. The morning of our expectations has given place to the noonday of our toil, and to the evening of our disappointment. The beautiful dream is over, and earthly joys are only passing guests. At eventide they are gone. The soul, sitting alone, feels how unrequited has been the love of God. Alone in the darkness it seeks his face.

II. WE DESIRE GOD IN THE NIGHT OF OUR DOUBTS. These will come. Old evidences do not afford us the same basis of faith. New difficulties come face to face with the intellect. Mysteries born of experience oppress the heart. Before, perhaps, we were hard and dogmatic to all who differed from us; before we were inclined to think that doubt was in itself a sin, and not the exquisite action of a sincere mind. Now we sit in darkness, and there is temporary eclipse of faith. What we want is God himself—the living God, God in Christ; and we are thankful if we can but "touch him." We feel how blessed religion is, even when our evidences are darkened, and with our soul we desire God in the night.

III. WE DESIRE GOD IN THE NIGHT OF OUR SEPARATIONS. They *must* come. Be the tie ever so tender, it must be cut; and we must say or look farewell, or perchance hear of the death of some beloved one in a foreign land. These tragedies are about us every day. New habiliments of mourning are put on every hour. No "touch of a vanished hand." Nothing below but empty space! Then the soul cries, "O God, be not far from me!"

IV. WE DESIRE GOD IN THE NIGHT OF OUR OWN DEPARTURE. And it *is* night. To the Christian, who looks through it to the morning, who believes in the better country, and who sees the light of the new Jerusalem flickering up into the sky as he ascends through the darkness,—still to him, strong as he may be in faith and hope, death is a dark hour. But *One* alone can lighten that. Not lover, acquaintance, mother, or friend. No. "When I pass through the valley of the shadow of death *thou art with me*."—W. M. S.

Ver. 16.—*Prayer in trouble.* "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." The "other lords," mentioned in the thirteenth verse, are all impotent in the hour of tribulation. Truly they are dead, as Carlyle says. "These idols of yours are wood; you pour wax and oil on them; the flies stick on them; they are not God, I tell you; they are black wood." So at the Reformation. Speaking of Luther, he says, "The quiet German heart, modest, patient of much, had at length got more than it could bear. Formalism, pagan-popeism, and other falsehood and corrupt semblance, had ruled long enough; and here once more was a man found who durst tell all men that God's world stood, not on semblances, but realities; that life was a truth, and not a lie!" There are idolatries in every age; but the idols of rank and fame and pleasure are of no avail in the hour of trouble.

I. HERE IS RECEPTION. The Lord receives them. He does not spurn their approach because they have kept away till then. The great Father never reproaches the repentant, returning Israel. No. Unlike the proud, resentful spirit of man, "the Lord God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." The haughty spirit of man would resent the approach of one who was simply driven by stress of weather into the haven of his protection.

II. HERE IS REALITY. They are filled with earnestness. It is no easy ritual of the lips. They "poured out" a prayer. Very expressive indeed is that. The rock was rent, and the waters flowed forth. The poor bruised heart could contain its agony no longer. There was confession. There was that blessed "outness" which of itself brings relief. These men had seen the pouring forth of the swollen Jordan, and of the storm-filled streams of Lebanon. So is it that the earnestness of the soul at once engages the attention and interest of God. It matters little whether prayer be liturgical or free, whether it be in the sanctuary or the closet, so long as the soul seeks God as the hart desireth the water-brooks; and the literal rendering of "prayer" here is "secret speech."

III. HERE IS DISCIPLINE. "When thy chastening was upon them." This is very different from self-chosen and self-inflicted chastisement. Some Christians in every age have become self-tormentors: some, with the Flagellants, in the infliction of physical torture, and some in constant introspection—painful searching of their own motives, and mourning over their own want of faith and of feeling. But this text speaks of God's own discipline—a Father's discipline, and therefore a wise, a kind, and a safe discipline. Moreover, it is but for "a season." We read, "*when* thy discipline was upon them," which, in its very language, suggests that it is not a lasting condition. The Jews came back from exile. Their punishments for idolatry gave place to pardon and restoration. So it is now. God does not delight in the sufferings of his children. "Tribulation worketh patience;" our "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." In the heart of the prickly encasement there is opening out a beautiful flower.—W. M. S.

Vers. 5—7, 8 (latter half).—*The righteousness of God's rule.* I. ITS APPARENT ABSENCE. We still find on the earth "them that dwell on high"—the arrogant, the presumptuous, the oppressor; there is to be seen "the lofty city," exalted in its pride of power, dealing its blows upon the weak and suffering, fearing not God nor regarding the rights of men. In every age, beneath every sky, these men and these cities have been known. To those who have been humiliated and ill treated, God has seemed absent; his righteousness has appeared afar off; their cry has been, "How long, O Lord, how long dost thou not avenge," etc.? Among such suffering and perplexed ones are down-trodden peoples, persecuted Churches, wronged individual men and women.

II. ITS ASSERTION IN DUE TIME. The justice of God "is not dead, but sleepeth." It may be truer to say that it waits in patience for the hour of manifestation; then it descends; and it appears: 1. In the utter overthrow of iniquity. The lofty are laid low, the proud city is brought down to the ground (ver. 5). Instead of power is *utter enfeeblement;* the weapon of cruelty is stricken out of its hand, the words of condemnation and cursing are taken out of its mouth. Instead of honour is *humiliation;* the throne is exchanged for the very dust of the ground; and instead of unholy joy is hopeless *misery.* 2. In the exaltation of rectitude (ver. 6). Those who have been

reduced to poverty and need by the unscrupulousness of the sinful will accede to their heritage of power, of wealth, of pleasure, or—what is better than these—of *influence*, of *sufficiency*, of *thankfulness*. God, the Most Upright One, smooths the path of the just (ver. 7), makes it level, enables the righteous to pursue their way of fruitful activity, of Divine worship, of holy joy.

III. THE EFFECT OF ITS ASSERTION. "When God's judgments are in the earth," *i.e.* when the righteousness of God is seen and felt in the infliction of penalty on the guilty and the levelling of the path of the just, then "the inhabitants . . . learn righteousness" (ver. 8). 1. The devout are confirmed in their devotion, and they cleave to God and to his service. 2. The waverers are decided, and they resolve to unite themselves with his people. 3. The presumptuous are alarmed, and they *may* be awakened and redeemed. This is God's intention in, and is the fitting end of, his Divine judgments; it is our folly and our sin if we allow that purpose to be defeated.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Athirst for God.* "The desire of our soul is to thy Name . . . with my soul have I desired thee." The primary reference here is to the hope of troubled hearts for Divine deliverance; but the words of the text are suggestive of the general truths—

I. THAT MAN IS CONSTITUTED TO CRAVE AFTER GOD. We have many indications of this truth. We find it in the facts that: 1. The noblest spirits among cultivated peoples find their chief joy in communion with him. 2. The worthiest spirits among uncultivated peoples have been athirst for God. 3. Religious truth and Divine worship prove a powerful attraction to the vast majority of mankind. 4. Every human being is found to possess a *capacity for* religious knowledge and devotion. 5. Human life without God is found to be constantly unsatisfying and restless.

II. THAT THIS GODWARD ASPIRATION, DULLED BY SIN, IS OFTEN AWAKENED BY AFFLICTION. "I desired thee *in the night*." Our interest in God, reduced by the various harmful and despoiling influences of a sinful society, sometimes so reduced as to be practically lost, is often awakened by affliction of some kind. It is not until the soul is brought down very low by sickness, by calamity, by bereavement, by treachery and disappointment, or by earthly failure and disenchantment, that it finds its deep and sore need of a heavenly Father, of an unfailing Friend, of a heavenly treasure. When thus injured and spoiled by sin, it is not until our souls are made to see their sinfulness in a fierce and awful light that we crave and cry out for an almighty and all-sufficient Saviour; *but then we do.*

III. THAT, REAWAKENED IN ADVERSITY, IT BECOMES A PERMANENT HABITUDE OF THE SOUL. "With my spirit . . . will I seek thee early." Whether or not we find this doctrine in the text, we find this truth in the will of God; and God expects to find this fact in human experience. It is bitterly disappointing to the good—and is it not a disappointment to the Good One?—when they who have been brought to the throne of grace by reflection are found, in after-days of comfort and sunshine, to leave the sanctuary unvisited, and to walk on their way, godless, prayerless, hopeless. Such men (1) defeat God's kind purposes; (2) add iniquity to their iniquity; (3) most seriously endanger their own future (see ch. i. 5).—C.

Ver. 10.—*Guilty insensibility.* The wise and good man will learn something from everything; the foolish and sinful man will learn nothing from anything. In whatever accents God may speak, this latter hears not his voice, and heeds not his will; he is guiltily insensible to all kinds of heavenly influence; he is—

I. UNTOUCHED BY THE VISITATION OF GOD'S GOODNESS. He does not "learn righteousness, though "favour be showed" to him by God. God may be, as he is, multiplying his mercies unto him, so that they are as the sands of the sea—innumerable; visiting him by day and by night with loving-kindnesses continually renewed, besetting him behind and before with his guardianship, laying his hand of gentle power upon him in guidance and in blessing. But all is lost upon him—he is unmindful of everything; he does not "learn righteousness;" he goes on, if not in oppression, or in vice, or in open atheism, yet in a guilty forgetfulness, in an unfilial indifference and ingratitude.

II. UNINFLUENCED BY HUMAN EXAMPLE. "In the land of uprightness he deals unjustly." Around him are men worshipping God, working devotedly in his cause,

living in accordance with his will, illustrating Christian virtues in the daily transactions and in the common relationships of life, bearing the best witness to the power and the excellency of Divine truth, supplying a source of influence which ought to tell on a human heart and to mould human character; but this is of no avail. The hardened heart is unmoved, its apathy is undisturbed, its course unchanged.

III. UNAFFECTED BY THE EVIDENCES OF GOD'S GREATNESS. "He will not behold the majesty of the Lord." There are three ways in which the majesty or the greatness of God is revealed to us, all of which deserve and demand our most patient and devout attention. 1. *In the material world.* In the sky, in the sea, in the mountain, in the storm, in the earthquake, etc. "With God," as manifested thus, "is terrible majesty" (Job xxxvii. 22); and he who does "not regard the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hand," is guiltily blind to the majesty of the Lord. 2. *In Divine providence.* The majestic holiness of God is seen in the revelation of his wrath against impurity, intemperance, violence, passion, and all other evils; also in the revelation of his approval of righteousness and peace, in the ordering of our human lives. Whoso is unobservant of this is a wickedly dull scholar in a world where such plain lessons are to be learnt. 3. *In the gospel of Jesus Christ.* There the majesty of God's character shines forth, and we see "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In the Incarnation itself, in the character of Jesus Christ, in the severity of the sorrows he bore, in the depth of the shame to which he stooped, in the awful moral grandeur of the death he died, in the unspeakable glory of his heavenly mission,—there, indeed, is the majesty of the Lord to be seen. He who will not dwell on this as on that which, above all other things, is worthy of his most patient and reverent regard, is one of "the wicked," with whom God "is angry."

LESSONS. 1. Let us be thankful if we are hearing and heeding the voice of God, if we are opening our hearts to the heavenly influence. 2. Let us take earnest heed to the fact that a guilty inattention leads on and down to a fatal deafness.—C.

Vers. 12—18.—*The argument from the past.* Great things are represented, by the prophetic voice, to have been done, and these furnish the strongest reason to expect great things in the future.

I. THE GREAT THINGS GOD HAS DONE FOR US. 1. *He has heard our cry* in the day of distress (vers. 16, 17). Few things go home to our hearts more readily than the words of the psalmist, "I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me." It is a great thing to have been heard of God, to have gained his pitiful ear, and to have enjoyed his merciful consideration; that amid the millions of his children he has distinguished us and bent on us his benign regard. 2. *He has granted full deliverance.* "Other lords . . . have had dominion . . . but [now] thee only will we celebrate; they are dead;" their very memory is perishing (vers. 13, 14). We may have been under the dominion of some cruel vice (lust, or avarice, or intemperance), or of "the world" (1 John); but in the mercy of God these spiritual adversaries have been defeated, have been slain, they are no more to be dreaded, and now a Divine Redeemer is the Object of our adoration; for him we live, his honour we seek, his Name we strive to glorify (ver. 15), in his holy and ennobling service we spend our days and our powers. 3. *He has granted spiritual enlargement.* (Ver. 15.) "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord." To some, especially to those whom he redeems from the bondage of vice or crime, God grants material enlargement, the improvement of their *estate*, the brightening of their *life*, the broadening of their *sphere*. To all who, at the touch of his liberating hand, come out of spiritual captivity into the freedom of his children, he gives spiritual advancement, increase of knowledge, of joy, of love, of influence, of hope. As we love and serve Christ, we are enlarged on every hand—the horizon of our souls is removed beyond its former bounds.

II. THE ARGUMENT THEREFROM. The fact that God has done such great things for us—and all that has been done for us has been wrought by him (ver. 12; and see Ps. lxxxvii. 7)—is a strong reason to expect other gracious things in the future. "Thou wilt ordain peace for us" (ver. 12). It is a scriptural argument that the conferring of greater blessings is a security to us for the possession of smaller ones (see Matt. vi. 25; Rom. viii. 32; Ps. lvi. 13). The gifts of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, (1) his most *costly* gifts, (2) his most *valuable* gifts, may be to us a strong assurance that

God will not only "ordain peace" in life and at death, but also lead us along all the path of life, and receive us to his presence and glory when our earthly course is run.—C.

Ver. 19 (with ver. 14).—*Contrasted issues.* Taking ver. 19 as it surely should be taken, in connection and in contrast with ver. 14, and understanding the primary reference of both of them to be to the hopes of the Hebrew nation at the time of the prophecy, we have our attention called to—

I. THE ISSUE OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS—DEATH. 1. It tends to fatal ruin. The tyrants of Babylon, being overthrown, should rise up no more, should never regain their position, were as dead men whose day was hopelessly and irretrievably gone. All unrighteousness tends to the same issue; it leads down to loss, to overthrow, to shame, to a depth of ruin from which there is no recovery. At length the guilty man (party, nation) is down so low that those who look on say, "He (it) is dead; he shall rise no more." 2. It travels fast to the grave. Guilty violence (Ps. lv. 23; cxl. 11) and shameful vice (Prov. ii. 18; ix. 18) make a quick passage to the tomb. 3. It sinks into permanent oblivion. God makes "their memory to perish" (see Ps. xxxiv. 16; Prov. x. 7; Eccles. viii. 10). No man cares to remember those whose lives have been disgraced by sin; their names lie unmentioned, and their memory fades from view till it is lost in the thickening shadows of time. 4. It goes down to the death which is eternal. "The wages of sin is death."

II. THE ISSUE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS—REVIVAL. "*Thy* dead men shall live." God's people who have fallen till they have seemed to be wholly lost shall be recovered and shall reappear. Righteousness is immortal; it cannot be buried and forgotten and lost. 1. It commonly ends in restoration to power and position. Joseph is cast into prison, but he comes out to be the first minister in Egypt. David is driven into the caves, but he comes forth to sit down upon the throne. The persecuted people of God, whether in Babylon, in the Vaudois valleys, in Holland, in the Highlands of Scotland, in the woods and rocks of Madagascar, come forth when the "red, right hand" of cruelty is stricken down, and appear as those that have risen from the tomb. 2. It secures an earthly immortality—that of a *lasting recollection:* "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance" (Ps. cxii. 6; Prov. x. 7): that, also, of *abiding influence;* for the effect of their holy lives and true, faithful words shall go down to distant generations. 3. It issues in eternal blessedness. The righteous shall go into "life eternal."—C.

Ver. 20.—*The duty of retirement.* There are periods in a nation's history, and there are times in a good man's life, when it is well to hear and wise to heed the admonition, "Enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." We may let this language suggest to us that we should—

I. MAKE TIME FOR DEVOUT REFLECTION. In busy, outwardly active times, when there is an imperious demand on every hand for "work," there is urgent need that this counsel should be given and be taken. Enter into the chamber of solemn and sacred meditation; consider what is your present spiritual condition; estimate the progress you are making in your course; reflect upon the swift and steady passage of your life; realize that the time is not far off when all earthly interest will be nothing, and when it will be everything to know that the righteous Judge is well pleased with the witness you are bearing and the work you are doing.

II. COMPEL EACH DAY TO YIELD ITS HOUR OF DIRECT INTERCOURSE WITH GOD. We cannot live, spiritually, on public devotion. Nothing will nourish the soul in the absence of private, individual fellowship with God. "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray . . . in secret" (Matt. vi.). The most pressing cares, domestic, or official, or public, will not excuse the neglect of private communion with God. If Daniel, with all the cares of Babylon upon him, found time to pray three times a day regularly (Dan. vi. 10), we can compel our duties to make room for devotion. Every day let God speak to us, and let us speak to him, within the shut doors of our own chamber.

III. TAKE UP THE ATTITUDE OF REVERENT EXPECTATION. There are times when man can do nothing more than he has done, and all that is left is patient waiting for God. "And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee." This may be the attitude: 1. *Of the diligent,* waiting God's increase on his industry. 2. *Of the disciplined,* waiting

God's crowning of his patience; whether of the embarrassed, of the sick, or of the defamed. It is to these that the words of the text are most applicable; for it is they who are to wait for a little while, "until the indignation be overpast," *i.e.* until the hour of deliverance is fully come, and the work of redemption has been wrought. But we may also regard this as the attribute: 3. *Of the co-worker with Christ*, waiting the Divine blessing on his zeal.—O.

Ver. 1.—*The bulwark of salvation.* Two suggestions are made concerning the association of this figure in the mind of Isaiah. Some think he had in view the circumstances of the Assyrian invasion in the time of Hezekiah, and designed to assure the people that, however boastful might be the Assyrian words, and however terrible the appearance of the Assyrian armies, they were safe, because the defence of God was better than the mightiest walls, or the loftiest towers, or the most destructive weapons. In preparation for the assault of the Assyrians, Hezekiah had done all in his power to fortify and defend Jerusalem; but, in the doing of his best, his trust was still in the Lord his God; and he looked for "walls and bulwarks" in the salvation which God promised him by Isaiah. But others regard this song as prepared beforehand, in anticipation of the deliverance from Babylon, and possession again of the holy city, though then it would be, for many years, a city *without walls* or bulwarks, and, even from human points of view, altogether dependent on the Divine defence. J. A. Alexander says, "The condition and feelings of the people after their return from exile are expressed by putting an ideal song into their mouths. Though the first clause does not necessarily mean that this should actually be sung, but merely that it might be sung, or that it would be appropriate to the times and feelings of the people, it is not at all improbable that it was actually used for this purpose, which could more readily be done as it is written in the form and manner of the psalms, with which it exhibits many points of resemblance." It would be quite in harmony with other parts of Scripture prophecy to regard Isaiah as having in mind both present and future circumstances; and it is usually safe to recognize an immediate historical reference. The two associations of the song will, therefore, give us our two points for consideration: 1. God's salvation may come in what he does for us, or outside us. 2. God's salvation may come in what he does by us, or within us.

I. GOD MAY DEFEND US BY WHAT HE DOES FOR US. In the case of Hezekiah, Jerusalem was saved by the sudden and overwhelming destruction of Sennacherib's army. In this we may find a type of all the cases in which men have been saved by the Divine mastering of their circumstances. But all these, which may be called "spectacular salvations," have for their chief design to enable us to apprehend those far higher moral and spiritual salvations that are wrought *within us*. The outward has little interest in itself. Our chief interest in *events* lies in their illustration, for those who are dependent on the senses, of moral and spiritual processes. The Bible is full of records of God's outward salvations. They begin with the dividing of the Red Sea, when the people were bidden to "stand still, and see the salvation of God." They are dotted all over the story of the wanderings. They appear again and again in the time of the Judges. Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah have such stories of Divine deliverance and protection to repeat; and psalmists of all the ages join the chorus that follows Moses' great song, "The Lord is my Strength, and my Song, and he is become my Salvation." We still may hold fast our confidence that God is working *for us* in our circumstances, and even by the discomfiting of our foes, and making for us plain paths. The God of providence is in our life; and in his rule of the events of our lives we too can see his salvation. Keen vision of God's working in things, persons, and events *outside us* we ought ever to cultivate; but the cultivation is a work of exceeding difficulty in this sensuous and scientific age, when man, his skill and his triumphs, are so unduly honoured.

II. GOD MAY DEFEND US BY WHAT HE DOES WITHIN US. He may give us a spirit of wisdom and good counsel, so that the action we take shall be prudent; and in this way security and even rescue from peril are oftentimes obtained. In times of anxiety less importance attaches to what our foes do than to what *we do*; and so God's grace in us, God's salvation of us, is the thing of supreme concern to us. Our salvation comes by this, "He strengtheneth us with strength in our soul." It follows upon the

fulfilment of this assurance, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." When the exiles went back to a Jerusalem that was without walls or defences, God kept them safe by helping them to act prudently, and to avoid giving offence to those around them. Looked at in this light, how full all our lives are of Divine salvations! Every circumstance of difficulty and trial; every time of perplexity, when decisions, on which the most serious consequences depended, had to be made, is seen to be a time, or a circumstance, in which God saved us by giving grace, wisdom, guidance, prudence, or good judgment. Either by help within us or without us, God will surely prove a "strong Salvation" to all who put their trust in him.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Perfect peace out of trust.* Literally, "Peace, peace;" the Hebrew superlative form meaning the "greatest, or perfect peace"—inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events, God's own peace, the peace which God's own Son knew, and left as his legacy to his disciples. These two last expressions give us two divisions for our subject.

I. GOD GIVES THOSE WHO TRUST HIM HIS OWN PEACE. 1. *God's peace is the result of his inward harmony.* There are no conflicts within him. And this seems an amazing thing to us, who never do the right save after a fight with the wrong in which we have come off conquerors. As a living Being—a Person—we must think of God as having mind, will, affections, emotions, attributes, and relations to others outside himself. He is One. But in our idea of the unity of God we include the manifold comprehensiveness of God; and we understand that in him is perfect peace, because there is harmony; judgment never conflicts with feeling, will never struggles against desire. Every line tends to the focus of Divine purpose; every power combines to execute the Divine thought. Sometimes our idea of the Divine peace is spoiled by representations that are made of the work of redemption, as if, in connection with it, his justice was in antagonism with his mercy, and his Law made hard terms with his love. Surely that redemption is the work of Divine peace; it is the outgoing of his whole being towards us in the harmony of pitying love.

> "Still hushedly, hushedly, snowed down the thought Divine,
> And in a voice of most exceeding peace, the Lord said
> (While against the breast Divine the waters of life leapt, gleaming, gladdening),
> 'Let the man enter in.'"
>
> (R. Buchanan.)

2. *God's peace follows on his aboveness.* A word has to be coined to express this thought. We feel that we should be at peace if we could *get above.* God is above: not in the conflict which we know, but calm in the vision of it all; calm in seeing the end from the beginning; peaceful as the doctor is when, above the patient, he reads the issue of the disease; peaceful as the teacher, who is above the child, and knows perfectly what is causing it so much care and toil. A little picture in the Leeds Exhibition showed us how man may feel God's peace out of his aboveness. An old farm-labourer, dressed in his long patched brown smock and clouted boots, and grasping tremblingly his stick, was looking up at a little opening that appeared in a dull, heavy, leaden sky. A grand old face, seamed and lined with years of poverty, toil, and care, but full of the peace which God alone can give; tears were glistening in the eyes, and standing ready to drop; but smiles were breaking through, as, remembering sorrows in the home and weary burdens on the heart, he sweetly said, "Up beyant is the blue sky." Peace and God, he knew, were up above; over there. 3. *God's peace attends on his righteousness and love.* Nothing can disturb the peace of him who alway doeth right, and is love. Peace and Righteousness go hand-in-hand—twin sisters—through all creation. They live and toil and die together. And in the heart and home of God they have dwelt together from everlasting, before the earth and the world were formed. So he is the God of peace.

II. GOD GIVES THOSE WHO TRUST HIM HIS SON'S PEACE. It is one thing to admire the peace of God, but quite another thing to feel that it may become ours, that it can ever be the possession and the power of a *man.* The contrasts, God, man, strike us as too severe. The step of descent is too vast. We want a Mediator. We ask for some instance in which God's peace can be seen in a man. And that is one of the revelations

made in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is prophesied of as the Prince of Peace. He was the Teachor of peace. He is our Peace. He knew the peace passing understanding. His peace was the peace of God, for it also came from inward harmony, from aboveness, and from the intertwinings of righteousness and love. But it also was, characteristically, man's peace. It was such a peace of mind and heart as we may know; and from Christ we may learn what its sources are. Man, too, may reach the restfulness of inward harmony. Man, too, may rise above the petty disturbances of life. Man, too, may win the perfect rule of righteousness and love. But it is Christ who teaches us, and shows us *how*, and gives us strength to *win*. He reveals the three great sources of peace for man, and they are found to be these—trust, submission, and obedience. Trust that says, "The Lord knoweth the way that I take." Submission that says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Obedience that says, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." These are the sources of peace for man, for they were the sources of peace for man's Head, the "Man Christ Jesus." Nay, but there is an earlier secret than this. In Christ, for man, is the great peace. Peace *with* God, before we can have peace *in* God, and so the peace *of* God ruling in our hearts. We "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and his work in us involves such a change in us, such a moral regeneration and renewal, as can only find fitting activity in lives of peacefulness and "sweet reasonableness." Yes, man can have God's peace; for he is a spiritual being, made in the image of God. He feels like God. He thinks like God. He wills like God. He loves like God. And he can be at peace like God. All, indeed, within limitations and in narrow measures; but the passing clouds can find a true mirror in a wayside pool as well as in a mighty mountain-lake. A dewdrop will hold the sunshine in its tiny ball; and the mighty forest oak will go into the limits of the acorn-seed. God can give his own eternal peace to man, his creature. He will give it, he does give it, to all who put their trust in him.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The call to continuous trust.* "Trust ye in the Lord *for ever*." The words "for ever" in the prophetical books are a figure for "always," "continuously," under all conditions; even in times when trust seems to have no foundations we may keep on trusting, because our trust really is in God.

I. WE CANNOT KEEP ON TRUSTING IF OUR TRUST IS IN THINGS. "The fashion of this world passeth away;" "Here we have no abiding city;" "Moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal." So often things will not be "according to our mind." Often we sadly say that "nothing is stable," and "we are sure of nothing."

II. WE CANNOT KEEP ON TRUSTING IF OUR TRUST IS IN MAN. For the pain of life is our disappointment in our best-loved friends. Live on to old age, and we are almost alone; some are changed, and some are dead, and some have proved unworthy. "Cease ye from man."

III. WE CANNOT KEEP ON TRUSTING IF OUR TRUST IS IN SELF. The self-revelations which come with advancing years humble us in the dust. Youth can have its self-confidences. But man has learned the life-lesson badly if he is not ready to say, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

IV. WE CAN KEEP ON TRUSTING IF OUR TRUST IS IN JEHOVAH. For he *is* what he *was*; he *will be* what he *is* and has *ever been*. He is an "overlasting Rock." He has been abundantly proved. Secure and blessed *always* are they who put their trust in him.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The level path of the good man.* This verse would better read, "The way of the just is *evenness*; thou, most upright, dost *make even* the path of the just." This suggests the two topics—(1) the prevailing feature of the good man's conduct; (2) the aid which God gives towards maintaining that feature.

I. THE PREVAILING FEATURE OF THE GOOD MAN'S CONDUCT—EVENNESS. The idea of the word may be expressed in New Testament language as "patient continuance in well-doing." The triumph of the good man's life is steady walking, never running, and never dragging, in the way of righteousness. Evenness may suggest "rectitude"—the ruling of all conduct and relations by the sensitiveness to that which is right and kind. Or it may suggest "consistency"—a shaping of all actions into the harmony of godly

principles. Or it may suggest the correction of the varying experience, now of mountain heights of emotion, and now of dark valleys of depression; the good man learns to prefer the level road. Or it may suggest the quietness of the good man's life. It flows on like the smooth river, that never roars in flood, always breathing out its blessing, always singing its low sweet song, always moving on to the ocean of God. But to describe any man's life as evenness reminds us at once that evenness is something *won*; it is not sinful man's natural state, it is a triumph out of struggle. The man who gains it at last must have known much levelling of mountains, raising of valleys, and making rough places plain. This may be illustrated by the labour and skill demanded in the making of a good plain level road through a country of hills and marshes. Compare Bunyan's figure of the varied pilgrim-path of "Christian." Many of us can only say, "Our path should be level, and we wish it were."

II. THE AID WHICH GOD GIVES TOWARDS MAINTAINING THIS FEATURE. We might have said, gaining and maintaining it; for only through grace can we win the true consistency of goodness, or continue in it. Isaiah comforts good people with the assurance that God is ever "making even" their path; working *with* them, and working *through* them, to this good end. He removes stumbling-blocks which are too big for them. He reveals to them the things that make their way uneven. He maintains within them the desire for righteousness. He guides every practical endeavour after goodness and charity. He makes the "plain path for our feet." If any man would be holding fast his integrity, he may be sure that God's hand is upon his hand.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*Attitude in times of judgment.* "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee." The connections of this chapter need some careful attention. The prophet, in the twelve preceding chapters, has given visions of the judgments that were ready to fall on the nations surrounding Israel—judgments in which Israel itself must share, since Israel had shared in the idolatries and the moral evils which had called those judgments forth. To most of the nations Divine judgments would prove to be desolation and destruction; an irrecoverable doom. To Israel, because, even in its shame and sin, some held fast by righteousness and God, judgment would be but chastisement, by means of which the nation should be purified and established. Tyre should be wiped away; its place would be no longer known; the foundation of her palaces should be for the spreading of the fisherman's nets. Babylon should be brought low, even to the dust; no shepherd's hut, no wandering Arab's tent, should rise on her foundations; the glory of Nebuchadnezzar should be the place of the satyr and the owl and the wild beasts of the desert. But Israel should come out of its time of judgment renewing its youth, purged from its idolatries, and witnessing, with a clearer voice than ever before, to its great truth, "The Lord Jehovah is one Lord." The prophet, in his vision, sees these judgments pass one by one; but, looking on beyond them, he sees the ransomed of Israel redeemed and saved, and he presents us beforehand with the song which they would unite to sing in the raptures of their deliverance. By telling the people the song which their noblest and best *would* sing when trials had wrought out their blessings, Isaiah teaches them the spirit which they ought to cherish *now*, as they anticipated the judgments, or were wearying themselves under their burden. By-and-by they would rejoice that they had held fast by God under the gloom. Then "waiting on him, and waiting for him," is just the attitude they should seek and cherish.

I. Viewed in one way, the circumstances through which Israel would be passing would be JUDGMENTS OF GOD; but viewed in another way, they would only be the ORDINARY COMMONPLACE FACTS OF THEIR NATIONAL LIFE. The growth into overwhelming power of some nations, until they swallowed up all the smaller nations around them, became proud, tyrannical, and luxurious; lost national virtue, and fell a prey to the enterprise and energy of fresher and younger nations. This process the Israelites actually saw going on, at different stages, in the kingdoms around them. The laws that ruled it, the final results of it, they could not discern, and they must have been gravely bewildered by it. All the more because they had themselves to suffer from the encroachments of these rising monarchies. In those trying days it could not have been an easy thing for a Jew to hold fast his faith in God. Reasoning could explain so little. Iniquity seemed to be triumphing over good. Jehovah

appeared to have loosed his hand, and left the world to riot in its self-will. Those were great men indeed who could rise above the disasters and the helplessness of the times, and stay themselves on God, and hope in him, and wait for him.

II. But that was quite A MODEL GENERATION. Each age, though expressing itself in new forms and terms, may find its own perplexities mirrored there. Early times had their chief difficulties in outward things, such as the aggrandizement of world-conquerors, and the debasing effect of idolatrous systems. As the world grows older, the perplexities and the trials of faith come more and more out of intellectual and moral conditions; and we incline to think that it is much harder work to hold on to God, with patient waiting, in times of mental and moral confusion than when the earth is disturbed with sword and spear and shield. Perhaps never were men called to steady themselves on God, and wait on him in the way of his judgments, as we are called. There are two peculiarities of our time which, seen on the one side, are just facts of life, but seen from the other side are judgments of God in the midst of which we are to wait upon him. 1. The disposition to accomplish all things by human effort, apart from God. Man, according to present-day teaching, is to be the Saviour and Salvation of man. Let but every man lift up his brother—so they say—and the world's golden age shall dawn; but the light that lightens it shall be the brilliancy of human genius, and not the "glory of the Lord." 2. The confusion which advancing knowledge has seemed to introduce into both doctrines and morals. Some of the greatest men of science have been reverent men who, while searching with a free spirit into all that can be known of creation, yet held God fast in the arms of trustful love, and found traces of his handiwork in everything they examined. But not a few are over-ready to discover—sometimes even ready to manufacture—antagonisms between reason and revelation. And even the best of us cannot fail to be influenced by the atmosphere of doubt which has thus been created for us. We know what mental struggle means. We know what it is to search after truth that seems ever to glide beyond our grasp. We, too, are walking in the way of God's judgments, and blessed are we if we can truly say, "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee."

We gather two lessons from these considerations. 1. *The bottom, the foundation, the rest, of all things is God.* The first truth which the child learns is the truth of God. The utmost truth towards which human intellects and human hearts can push their devious, struggling way, is God. The simplest word that infant lips can utter is "God;" the largest and awe-fullest word that can burn upon an archangel's lips is the Name of God. That man knows something who knows a little of God. That man knows nothing—all he may seem to know is not within the sphere of true being—who does not know God. The steadying, the resting, of a man's soul is impossible save in God. "Who is a Rock save our God?" Then our supreme work in life must be *to know God* —to know him by "waiting upon him;" to know him in the face of Jesus Christ. 2. And we learn that those who would hold by God *will have to "wait" for him.* God tests the trusting ones by his mysterious doings and dealings. He hides, as it were, behind the clouds and the darkness that encircle his throne. He is even to be waited on in the "way of his judgments." And such a spirit of waiting alone can preserve us amid the judgments. It lies at the very basis of noble and regenerate character. And all life is to us according to our character. "To the pure all things are pure; to the impure nothing is pure." To the bad, godless man, the highest mercies become curses; the self-centred character can make poison even out of angels' food. To the bad man, punishments are ruin, desolation, woe; even as to heathen nations these prophetic burdens were unredeemable calamity. But to the good man, the God-centred man, punishments are but chastisements, out of which are wrought "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." It has been said that the "dealings of God are punishments to the wicked, but chastisements to the righteous." It should rather be said that there is no difference in the Divine dealing—judgments come both on the righteous and on the wicked; but the attitude in which we meet the judgments makes all the difference. The ungodly man bruises himself "against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler." The godly man—who "waits on the Lord"—bends to bear the rod of his heavenly Father's chastening. To the godless man life is just stern iron and brass; but the Christian man, having learnt of God, is alchemist enough to turn all he touches to finest gold. Then "trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." —R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Full allegiance to Jehovah.* This may be regarded as still a part of the song which the exiles would sing when the way was made plain for their return to their own beloved land. The way would not be plain until the great oppressing city of Babylon, and the great oppressing dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar, had been humbled. Then God would "ordain peace" for his people; and then the full and glad allegiance of his people to him could be fully and freely expressed and manifested. The answering spiritual truth is that we are under the tyranny of other lords—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Even while we struggle and suffer under their oppression, the power of this "body of sin and death," we may hold fast our allegiance to God in heart and purpose; and we may look on to the time that is speedily coming, when God shall himself accomplish our deliverance, and then our allegiance shall gain full and hearty expression; we shall praise him only, we shall serve him only, and praise and serve him as we ought. Getting illustration from the historical circumstances, we may set forth this point in its personal applications under three divisions.

I. ISRAEL'S TIMES OF OPPRESSION UNDER HEATHEN RULERS. These include the oppression under Pharaoh in Egypt; the inroads of neighbouring nations in the times of the Judges; the temporary supremacy of the Philistines; the degrading supremacy of foreign idolatrous systems in the age of the later kings; the crushing of the national life by the self-aggrandizing Assyrians and Babylonians. Israel had a full experience of the power of the oppressor, many "other lords" had held dominion over Israel. These may represent the tyrannies of social custom, prevailing opinion, bodily lust, easily besetting sins, and worldly persecution, which now bear so hardly upon the saints of God. If these do but hold a usurped dominion, it is too often so stringent as almost to crush out all expressions of the life unto God.

II. ISRAEL'S HEART OF ALLEGIANCE TO GOD IN TIMES OF OPPRESSION. The elect remnant, in every age, kept the allegiance, though they had to hide it in secret places. A "ten righteous" ever kept the nation from utter destruction. There is a holy leaven among us now.

III. ISRAEL'S FREEDOM FOR FULL ALLEGIANCE IN THE DIVINE INTERVENTION. Sooner or later God would deliver them, and will deliver us; and then we can open our lips, "make mention of his Name," and give ourselves openly to him, as we have held ourselves secretly for him all through the trying time.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Prayer forced by trouble.* One of the commonest, and often one of the most painful, of human experiences. The scoffer bends the knee when life is placed in sudden peril. The prayerless cry mightily when death stares them in the face. Prayerlessness is only a fair-weather attainment. Like the children who do not seem to care for mother when health abounds, but run to her at once when the head is aching; so we can bravely do without God while the sun shines, but want him when the black thunder-clouds come creeping up against the wind. Let the cholera come into our midst, and almost abjectly the nation begins to ask for days of humiliation and prayer. As this subject is a somewhat familiar one, the following divisions may give some freshness to the treatment of it.

I. A SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENCE IS NOURISHED BY PROSPERITIES AND SUCCESSES. The ordinary man does not feel the need of God when all goes well with him. He does not need prayer, for he is not conscious of anything to pray for. If man can stand alone, why should we seek God? And the Christian man, who believes in prayer, is under grave and serious temptation to neglect prayer when he is successful, and free from care. As soon as we become satisfied with ourselves we begin to lose our "first love." The spirit of independence and the spirit of prayer never did, and never can, dwell together. Ivy is a poor thing if it grows up independently. Its beauty unfolds only when it leans on another—on one who has independent strength.

II. A SPIRIT OF DEPENDENCE IS NOURISHED BY CALAMITIES. In a thousand forms they come to us, but their message is always the same. They say to us, "See, you cannot, by yourself." Life is not all sunshine and prosperity. We must take it as a whole, take it as it is. We must reckon for trouble. And for life as a whole we need God; we ought to be dependent; we should be happy in our dependence. Jacob, in his anxiety at meeting Esau, was forced to dependence and prayer. Joshua, discomfited

before Ai, was forced to prayer. Jehoshaphat, threatened by national foes, flies to prayer. Hezekiah, stricken with disease and facing death, turns his face to the wall, and prays. Then impress the graciousness of the Divine ways with us. Watching over our eternal interests, God saves us again from the perils of independence, and calls us back to dependence, by putting trouble into our lives, and we learn to say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now will I keep thy Word."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 1.—The Triple Judgment on the Powers of Darkness. The crowning judgment of all is now briefly described. "In that day"—the day of God's vengeance—when all his other enemies have been put down, Jehovah shall finally visit with his sword three mighty foes, which are described under three figures—the first as "Leviathan, the swift serpent;" the second as "Leviathan, the crooked serpent;" and the third as "the dragon that is in the sea." It has been usual to see in these three monsters three kingdoms inimical to God—either Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt; or Assyria, Egypt, and Tyre; or Media, Persia, and Egypt. But this diversity of interpretation shows that there is no particular fitness in the emblems to symbolize any special kingdoms or world-powers, while the imagery itself and the law of climax alike point to something higher than world-powers being intended. "Leviathan," in Job iii. 8, where the word first occurs, represents a supramundane power—probably "the dragon, the enemy of light, who in old Eastern traditions is conceived as ready to swallow up sun and moon, and plunge creation in original chaos or darkness" ('Speaker's Commentary,' vol. iv. p. 28); and the "dragon" is a customary emblem of Satan himself (Ps. xci. 13; ch. li. 9; Rev. xii. 7, 9), the prince of darkness. The triple vengeance here is parallel to the triple punishment, in the apocalyptic vision (Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10), of "the devil," "the beast," and "the false prophet," who have been termed by commentators "the three great enemies of God's kingdom" (see 'Speaker's Commentary on the New Testament,' vol. iv. p. 802).

Ver. 1.—The Lord with his sore and great and strong sword. The "sword" of Jehovah is first heard of in the Pentateuch, where it is called "glittering" (Deut. xxxii. 41). It is spoken of by David (Ps. vii. 12), and frequently by Isaiah (see ch. xxxi. 8; xxxiv. 5, 6; xlvi. 16). Mr. Cheyne supposes the idea to have been taken from the Babylonian mythology, and seems to think it half material. But it is merely on a par with other anthropomorphisms. The word rendered "sore" probably means "well-tempered," "keen." **Leviathan.** Etymologically, the term "Leviathan" appears to mean "that which is coiled" or "twisted," whence it would seem to have been primarily applied, as in the present verse, to serpents. In Job xli. 1—34, however, it manifestly designates the crocodile, while in Ps. civ. 26 it must be used of some kind of cetacean. Thus its most appropriate English rendering would be "monster." **The piercing serpent;** rather, *the fleet*, or *fugitive serpent*. It is a general characteristic of the snake tribe to glide away and hide themselves when disturbed. **Even leviathan that crooked serpent;** rather, *and also leviathan that crooked serpent*. It is quite clear that two distinct foes of God are pointed at—one characterized as "fleet," the other as "tortuous." **And he shall slay the dragon.** Here is mention of a third enemy, probably Satan himself (see the introductory paragraph to this section).

Vers. 2—6.—God's Care for his Vineyard. This piece may be called a companion picture to ch. v. 1—7, or a joy-song to be set over against that dirge. In both the figure of the vineyard is employed to express the people of God, and God is "the Lord of the vineyard." But whereas, on the former occasion, all was wrath and fury, menace and judgment, here all is mercy and loving-kindness, protection and promise. The difference is, no doubt, not with God, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. i. 17), but with the vineyard, which is either not the same, or, if the same, then differently circumstanced. The vineyard of ch. v. is beyond all doubt the Jewish Church in the time of Isaiah, or in the times shortly after. The vineyard of the present place is either the Christian Church, or the Jewish Church reformed and purified by suffering. It is not the Church triumphant in heaven, since

there are still "briars and thorns" in it, and there are still those belonging to it who have to "make their peace with God." The prophet has come back from his investigations of the remote future and the supramundane sphere to something which belongs to earth, and perhaps not to a very distant period. His second "song of the vineyard" may well comfort the Church through all her earthly struggles.

Ver. 2.—**Sing ye unto her.** Our translators have, strangely enough, inverted the order of the two clauses, which stand thus in the Hebrew: "A vineyard of red wine; sing ye unto it," or "sing ye *of* it." The "vineyard of red wine" is one that produces abundance of rich fruit.

Ver. 3.—**I the Lord do keep it**; or, *guard it* (comp. ch. xxvi. 3; xlii. 6; xlix. 8; Ps. cxxi. 5). Vineyards were considered to require special watching, since they were liable to damage both from thieves and foxes (Cant. ii. 15). It was usual to build towers in them, from which a watch could be kept (ch. v. 2; Matt. xxi. 33). **I will water it every moment** (compare the threat in ch. v. 6, "I will command my clouds that they rain no rain upon it"). The Church needs and receives "the continual dew of God's blessing."

Ver. 4.—**Fury is not in me**; *i.e.* "I am not now angered against my vineyard, as on the former occasion (ch. v. 47); or at any rate my anger now is not fury." (Isaiah frequently ascribes "fury" to God, as in ch. xxxiv. 2; xlii. 25; li. 17, 20, 22; lviii. 18; lxiii. 3, 5, 6; lxvi. 15.) **Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle?** The "briars and thorns" are apparently unrighteous members of the Church, who have fallen below their privileges. God asks, "Who will set the briars and thorns in array against me?" in a tone of contempt. "Who will dare to do battle against me with such weak material?" And then he adds a forecast of the result in such a case: "I would move forward; I would burn them all together" (comp. ch. x. 17).

Ver. 5.—**Or let him take hold of my strength.** There is another alternative. If the "thorns and the briars" are not prepared to contend in battle against God, let them adopt a different course. Let them "lay hold of God's strength," place themselves under his protection, and make their appeal to him, and see if they cannot "make their peace with him." A truly evangelical invitation! The enemies of God are entreated to cease from striving against him, and are taught that the door of repentance is still open to them. God is willing to be reconciled even to his enemies. Let them **make peace with him, make peace with him.** The reiteration constitutes an appeal of extreme earnestness and tenderness, which none could reject but the utterly impenitent.

Ver. 6.—**He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root**; rather, *in the days to come Jacob shall strike root.* Jacob, lately the vineyard, is now compared to a single vine, which becomes strong by striking its roots deep into the soil, and then, as a consequence, **blossoms and buds, and fills the face of the world with fruit.** So the Israel of God, firmly rooted in the soil of God's favour, would blossom with graces of all kinds, and bring forth the abundant fruit of good works.

Vers. 7—11.—THE COMING JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH A CHASTISEMENT IN WHICH MERCY IS BLENDED WITH JUSTICE. A coming judgment upon Judah has been one of the main subjects of Isaiah's prophecy from the beginning. It has been included in the catalogue of "burdens" (see ch. xxii.). It will have to be one of the prophet's main subjects to the end of his "book." Hence he may at any time recur to it, as he does now, without special reason or excuse. In this place the special aspect under which the judgment presents itself to him is that of its merciful character, (1) in degree (vers. 7, 8); (2) in intention (ver. 9). While noting this, he feels, however, bound to note also, that the judgment is, while it lasts, severe (vers. 10, 11).

Ver. 7.—**Hath he smitten him, etc.?** *i.e.* "Has God smitten Judah, as he (God) smote Judah's smiters?" Judah's chief smiters were Assyria and Babylon. The judgments upon them would be more severe than that upon Judah. They would be destroyed; Judah would be taken captive, and restored. **Them that are slain by him**; rather, *them that slew him* (so Lowth, Ewald, Knobel, and Mr. Cheyne). But, to obtain this meaning, the pointing of the present text must be altered. The law of parallelism seems, however, to require the alteration.

Ver. 8.—Our translators have entirely mistaken the meaning of this verse. The proper rendering is, *In measure, when thou puttest her away, thou wilt contend with her; he sighed with his keen breath in the day of the east wind.* "In measure" means "with forbearance and moderation"—the punishment being carefully adjusted to the degree of the offence. God was about to "put Judah away"—to banish her into a far country; but still he would refrain himself—he would "not suffer his whole displeasure to arise," or give her over wholly to destruc-

tion. **In the day of the east wind,** or of the national catastrophe, when his breath was fierce and hard against his people, he would "sigh" at the needful chastisement. As Dr. Kay well says, "Amid the rough and stern severity which he breathed into the tempest, there was an undertone of sadness and grief."

Ver. 9.—**By this**; *i.e.* "by the punishment inflicted." God accepts punishment as an expiation of sin; and this punishment of Judah was especially intended to be expiatory, and to remove at once his guilt, and the evil temper which had led him into sin. **Its fruit** would be a revulsion from idolatry, which would show itself in a fierce determination to destroy all idolatrous emblems and implements, **altars, groves, images,** and the like. This spirit was strongly shown in the Maccabee period (see 1 Macc. v. 44, 68; x. 84; xiii. 47, etc.). **He maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones.** A calcining of the stones into lime is probably intended. It was usual to subject the idolatrous objects to the action of fire, and then to stamp them into powder (2 Kings xxiii. 4, 6, 11, 12, 15, etc.). **The groves and images** (comp. 1 Kings xv. 13; xvi. 33; 2 Kings xvii. 10; 2 Chron. xiv. 3; and see the comment on ch. xvii. 8).

Ver. 10.—**Yet the defenced city** shall be desolate. Though her punishment is in mercy, as a chastisement which is to purge away her sin, yet Jerusalem *shall* for a time be desolate, void, without inhabitant, **left like a wilderness. Forsaken**; or, *put away*; the same word that is used in ver. 8 of Jerusalem. **There shall the calf feed.** A familiar image of desolation (comp. ch. v. 17; xvii. 2; xxxii. 14, etc.).

Ver. 11.—**When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off.** By a sudden introduction of metaphor, the city becomes a tree, the prophet's thought going back, perhaps, to ver. 6. "Withered boughs" are indications of internal rottenness, and must be "broken off" to give the tree a chance of recovery. Samaria may be viewed as such a "bough," if the "tree" be taken as "the Israel of God" in the wider sense. Otherwise, we must suppose a threat against individual Judæans. **The women come.** Weak women are strong enough to break off dead branches; they fall at a touch, and "their end is to be burned" (Heb. vi. 8). **For it is a people of no understanding.** It was folly, madness, to turn away from Jehovah, and go after other gods. Only through having "no understanding" could Israel have been so foolish (comp. Deut. xxxii. 28; 2 Kings xvii. 15; Jer. iv. 22). **He that made them . . . he that formed them** (comp. ch. xliii. 1, 7). God "hateth nothing that he has made" (Collect for Ash Wednesday). He made all men, but he "made" and "formed" Israel with exceptional care, and exceptional care leads on to exceptional love. **Will not have mercy . . . will show them no favour**; *i.e.* "will not spare." No contradiction of vers. 7, 8 is intended. God will have "measure" and "mercy" in his punishment of Israel, but will not so have mercy as not to punish severely.

Vers. 12, 13.—JUDAH PROMISED RESTORATION. The general practice of Isaiah is to append to gloomy prophecies words of encouragement. He does this even when heathen nations are denounced (ch. xviii. 7; xix. 18—25; xxiii. 17, 18); and still more when he is predicting judgments upon Israel (ch. ii. 2—4; vi. 13; x. 20—34; xxiv. 23; xxix. 18—24, etc.). The encouragement in this place is a promise of return after dispersion, and of re-establishment on the "holy mount at Jerusalem" (ver. 13).

Ver. 12.—**The Lord shall beat off**; *i.e.* "gather in his harvest." The metaphor is taken either from the beating of olive trees to obtain the berries (see ch. xvii. 6), or from the beating out of the grain by a threshing-flail (Judg. vi. 11; Ruth ii. 17; and below, ch. xxviii. 27). Perhaps the best translation would be, *The Lord shall thresh.* **From the channel of the river**; rather, *from the strong stream of the river.* As usual, "*the* river" (*hannahar*) is the Euphrates (comp. Gen. xxxi. 21; Exod. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, 14, 15, etc.). Its "strong stream," or "flood," is contrasted with the scant thread of water which was alone to be found in the "Torrens Ægypti." **The stream of Egypt** (*nachal Mizraim*) is generally allowed to be the modern *Wady el Arish*, which was appointed to be the southern boundary of the Holy Land (Numb. xxxiv. 5; 1 Kings viii. 65). The Lord would collect within these limits all that were of Israel. He would also, as appears from the next verse, subsequently overstep the limits.

Ver. 13.—**The great trumpet shall be blown**; rather, *a great trumpet* (comp. Matt. xxiv. 31; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16). This imagery, and the return of the Israelites *from Egypt and Assyria*, point rather to the final gathering of Israel into the Church triumphant than to the return from the Babylonian captivity. Egypt and Assyria were certainly not the countries from which they came chiefly at that time. But they are the countries from which they will chiefly come when Jehovah "sets his hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of his people" (ch. xi. 11). **The outcasts** (comp. ch. xi. 12).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Spiritual wickedness in high places powerless to resist God.* As Isaiah was, somehow or other, brought into contact with the dualistic doctrine of the Zoroastrians (ch. xlv. 5—7), it was important that he should bear witness to the impotency of the powers of evil when they matched themselves against Jehovah. The Zoroastrians taught that there were two great principles, one of good, and the other of evil, whom they called respectively Ahura-mazda and Angro-mainyus, who were both of them uncreated and independent one of the other, and between whom there had been from all eternity, and always would be, a bitter contest and rivalry, each seeking to injure, baffle, and in every possible way annoy and thwart the other. Both principles were real persons, possessed of will, intelligence, power, consciousness, and other personal qualities. The struggle between them was constant and well-balanced, with certainly no marked preponderance of the good over the evil. Whatever good thing Ahura-mazda had created from the beginning of time, Angro-mainyus had corrupted and ruined it. Moral and physical evils were alike at his disposal. He could blast the earth with barrenness, or make it produce thorns, thistles, and poisonous plants; his were the earthquake, the storm, the plague of hail, the thunderbolt; he could cause disease and death, sweep off a nation's flocks and herds by murrain, or depopulate a continent by pestilence; ferocious wild beasts, serpents, toads, mice, hornets, mosquitoes, were his creation; he had invented and introduced into the world the sins of witchcraft, murder, unbelief, cannibalism; he excited wars and tumults, continually stirred up the bad against the good, and laboured by every possible expedient to make vice triumph over virtue. Ahura-mazda could exercise no control over him; the utmost that he could do was to keep a perpetual watch upon his rival, and seek to baffle and defeat him. This he was not always able to; despite his best endeavours, Angro-mainyus was not unfrequently victorious. It was probably to meet this doctrine, and prevent its having weight with his disciples, that Isaiah taught so explicitly the nothingness of the highest powers of evil in any contest with the Almighty. He had already stated that, at the end of the world, God would visit and punish "the host of the high ones that were on high," as well as the kings of the earth upon the earth (ch. xxiv. 21). He now presents evil in a threefold personal form of the highest awfulness and grandeur, and declares its conquest in this threefold form by Jehovah. God is to "punish" the two leviathans with his sword, and actually to "slay the dragon." This might seem to go beyond the statements of the Revelation of St. John (xx. 10); but it is probably to be understood, in the same sense, of a living death. The triumph is at any rate complete, final, unmistakable. Evil can do nothing against good, but is wholly overcome by it.

Vers. 3—5.—*The means whereby God purifies and perfects his Church.* Despite human weakness and human perversity, God will build up and establish a faithful Church—he will "purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). It is for his honour that this should be so, and he is strong enough to effect it. His "strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9). We are shown here some, at any rate, of the chief means whereby he effects his purpose. Most prominent of all is—

I. HIS PERPETUAL WATCHFUL GUARDIANSHIP. "I the Lord do keep it." "I will keep it night and day." Incessant watchful care, never slacking, never wearied, the fruit of abounding infinite love,—this is the first thing. The Lord "keeps the city." The Lord is his Church's "Keeper," so that "the sun shall not burn it by day, neither the moon by night;" so that the thief shall not enter in, nor the fox spoil; so that the hatred and wiles of Satan shall be of no avail; so that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). The Lord's care is unceasing—"he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. cxxi. 4). The Lord's care is effectual—"he keepeth his mercy *for ever*" (Ps. lxxxix. 28).

II. HIS CONSTANT REFRESHING GRACE. "I will water it *every moment*." Not only day by day and hour by hour, but *momently*, does his grace descend on his Church, strengthening it, reviving it, refreshing it. His Holy Spirit teaches men's hearts

continually with a doctrine that "distils as the dew" (Deut. xxxii. 2), softens them with an influence that "drops as the rain." He gives "grace for grace;" leads on "from strength to strength;" converts, upholds, confirms, sustains, each weak and wavering soul; cleanses, purifies, infuses light, and strength, and sweetness, and every other virtue into each heart that will admit them; thus constituting and "presenting to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 27).

III. HIS KEEN PURGING FIRES. "The briars and thorns . . . will I burn together." The Church, while on earth, will always have imperfections, weak brethren, unworthy members, faults, ay, sins, even in the best. It is among the greatest of God's mercies to the Church that he does not overlook these, but is keenly alive to them—yea, "sets men's secret sins in the light of his countenance" (Ps. xc. 8). For when these things are noted, there is a hope that they may be remedied. God is ever purging his Church. He "turns his hand upon it, and purely purges away its dross and taketh away all its tin" (ch. i. 25). By pain and suffering, by chastisements of various kinds, by sickness, and disappointment, and ill success, and loss of those dear to them, he leads men to conviction of sin, and hatred of it, and aversion from it, and contrition, and amendment. Where these fail, there is the final remedy, which saves the Church, when the individual will not be saved—the remedy of excision, when the dead branch is broken off, and "cast into the fire, and burned" (John xv. 6). But in thousands of cases the purging is effectual, the keen fire does its work, and purifies without destroying. The soul that was in danger turns to God, and "takes hold of his strength," and "makes its peace with him," and both the Church and the individual gain.

Vers. 7, 8.—*The moderation of God's chastisements.* All God's doings are "with measure." At the creation he "weighed the hills in a balance" (ch. xl. 12), "made a weight for the winds," and "weighed the waters by measure" (Job xxviii. 25). He sets one thing against another, "looks to the end of the earth," and "seeth under the whole heaven" (Job xxviii. 24). There is nothing hasty, rash, or inconsiderate in his doings. He is a law to himself; and the perfect harmony of his own nature necessarily produces the result that order and measure pervade all that he accomplishes. "Measure," as Hooker says, "is that which perfecteth all things, because everything is for some end, neither can that thing be available to any end which is not proportionable thereunto, and to proportion as well excesses as defects are opposite" ('Eccl. Pol.,' v. 55, § 2). God's chastisements have for their end the recovery of those whom he chastises, and would not be effectual for this end unless they were carefully apportioned and adjusted to the particular case. Chastisements unduly light would have no restraining or educational force; they would be contemned, despised, and would harden those whom they were intended to influence for good. On the other hand, over-severe chastisements would crush and ruin. They would "quench the smoking flax" and "break the bruised reed" (Matt. xii. 20), so rendering recovery impossible. Thus measure is needed in chastisements; and those which God inflicts are measured with most marvellous exactitude. He metes out to all the exact cross, difficulty, suffering, which is suited to bring them to him. He afflicts them always more lightly than they deserve. "In measure he contends with them," apportioning their day to their strength, and their temptations to their ability to bear them.

Ver. 12.—*The Israel of God gathered in and garnered one by one.* While Scripture often speaks broadly of the call and conversion of nations, it yet, to an attentive reader, is continually proclaiming the fact that salvation is an individual matter. No privileges of birth or covenant, of Church-membership or Church-position, assure any one who has come to years of discretion that he is among the saved, or can make up for the want of personal fitness, personal faith, personal sincerity. God is very careful, and very choice, when he "makes up his jewels" (Mal. iii. 17). His eye is not only over *all*, but *each*. He tests them "one by one." He says to each, "My son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). He requires of each conversion to him, trust in him, the earnest wish to please him. "One by one," as they become fit for it, he gathers them in, adds them to his crown, causes them to join the "innumerable company" of his elect—"the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). This consideration should make

men careful to assure themselves; (1) of their hold on the faith; (2) of their interest in Christ; (3) of their possession of that "holiness" without which "no one shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—"*In that day.*" We have here a general picture of the events which precede the condition of the inauguration of a new era.

I. THE FIGHT WITH THE MONSTER OR MONSTERS. We cannot enter into the subject of this symbolism, in reference to which, in the absence of definite information, so much of fanciful interpretation has gathered. We cannot refer the serpent or the dragon to the storm-cloud, or lightning, as some have done; nor historically to Egypt and Assyria. Something much deeper seems to be meant, as in the legends of the combat of Apollo, the greatest god of the Greeks, with the Python at Delphi. The dragon is symbolic, in ancient thought generally, of the power of death, of the under-world, into which humanity in its sinfulness and weakness is prone to fall. Jehovah will overcome this fiendish power: such seems to be the meaning of the prophecy.

II. RESTORATION OF ISRAEL TO FAVOUR. Here the prophecy passes into song. The Church appears under the favourite image of the vineyard. Jehovah is its Keeper, who waters and watches it by night and by day. His feelings are those of pure love, and his wrath is reserved for those who would injure the sacred enclosure. Were such thorns and thistles before him, he would set them on fire. These are figures of the enemies of the Church (see 2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7). Yet if ever these yield themselves, they may find mercy. "A truly evangelical belief that God is willing to be reconciled, even to his enemies. Its presence has given the prophecy a spiritual superiority over the other prophetic descriptions of the judgment upon the hostile nations, *e.g.* ch. lxvi. 16. Even according to ch. xix. 22, Egypt must be first smitten in order that it may be healed" (Cheyne). As the proverb says, "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. xviii. 10). So here the meaning is, "Let the unrighteous man take sanctuary with Jehovah, and become by penitence and obedience a servant of his." And the elect nation will take root, and throw its sheltering foliage over the nations—a tree of healing (Rev. xxii. 2); and the blessings of salvation shall be diffused over the world (cf. ch. xxxvii. 31; Hos. xiv. 6). The union of Jew and Gentile seems foreshadowed, and the removal of the distinction between them. Salvation was of them and for the world (John iv. 22; Eph. ii. 14).

III. THE MITIGATION OF DIVINE CHASTISEMENTS. The punishment of the people has not been so severe as that of their enemies. There was and ever is "measure" in the afflictions of God; they do not exceed the bounds of justice nor the limits of man's enduring power. "He never smites with both hands;" he sifts, but does not destroy. (For the threshing-floor, cf. ch. xxi. 10.) He was wroth, but not without love; has banished, but not put an end to, his people. And now, as ever, he would "reason together" with them, and proclaim the terms upon which he will mercifully accept their repentance as an atonement for guilt. They must destroy the emblems of idolatry, and put an utter end to it; and thus, purged from its filth, be prepared for salvation. Punishment will cease when sin ceases, but not before. And when the sin is honestly put away, it may ever be said to the sinner, "Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil; with them, forgive yourself."

IV. THE FATE OF THE WORLD'S METROPOLIS. For it seems better so to understand the allusion than to Jerusalem. Its fortifications will be razed, its population be dismissed, and the cattle will browse upon the deserted scene. In contrast to the magnificent parks and gardens of the great cities, there will be but stunted bushes, affording firewood to the poor women who come to pick it up (Cheyne). Others, however, understand the prophecy to refer to Jerusalem itself. The reason assigned for the doom is *ignorance*, as so often in Scripture—*guilty ignorance*. As the "beginning of wisdom" is not prudence, policy, science, or philosophy, but the "fear of God," so irreverence and contempt of Divine laws, leading to sensuality and vice, are identical with ignorance and folly. "Such ignorance does not excuse men or lessen the guilt

of their wickedness; for they who sin are conscious of their sinfulness, though they are blinded by their lust. Wickedness and ignorance are therefore closely connected, but the connection is of such a nature that ignorance proceeds from the sinful disposition of the mind" (Calvin). Oh "to be wise and to understand" (Deut. xxxii. 29)! How dark and dreadful the ignorance which seems to shut out the favour and compassion of the all-compassionate God!

V. ORACLE OF COMFORT. The hand that smites and brings low is also the hand that raises up; it scatters in judgment, but recalls and gathers together again in mercy. From the great river of Assyria to that of Egypt the children of Israel will be gathered one by one. A great trumpet, signalling the Divine interposition, will be blown (cf. ch. xviii. 3; xi. 12; Matt. xxiv. 31), and the scattered abroad will be seen thronging to the holy mount in Jerusalem. Thus again there rises upon us that glorious vision of a united and redeemed Church, gathered out of all nations, for which change and suffering, conflict and sifting, prepare. All Christian prayer, activity, waiting, and watching point toward the coming of the Christ, the Deliverer, to the spiritual Zion, to turn away ungodliness and to found the new and enduring empire of righteousness.—J.

Ver. 3.—*Divine guardianship.* "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Then there are hurtful powers and hurtful people in the world. The Word itself lets light in upon the condition of humanity. There are hidden invisible foes; and there is need for One who can discern and defeat them.

I. THE EYE THAT SEES. This is all-important. For we are blind to our worst enemies. Evil puts on the garb of good. And evil hides itself. The serpent is coiled up at the bottom of the cup. The adder lurks in the grass. By the river-side the alligator lurks; his skin the very colour of the stones. God's eye can search all. His vision sweeps all space. His vigilance never sleeps. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber."

II. THE HEART THAT LOVES. This is our truest defence. It is affection that keeps alive this vigilance. There is no eye like the eye of love. We know this in a measure from our observation of the human spheres. How quick a mother's eye is to detect first departures from the holy and the true—first dalliances with evil! The tutor is not so sure a guardian as the parent. All Divine revelation tells us that God is love. Why warn, rebuke, exhort? Why send the prophet to the guilty cities, and the only begotten Son, the Saviour, to the lost race? This is the explanation of all: "God so loved the world."

III. THE GUARDIANSHIP THAT IS COMPLETE. Lest "any." *That* includes all the forms and forces of evil. We may be awake to special dangers, just as we pay honour to special virtues. There are dangers which are so pronounced, where the penalties are so marked, that our consciousness is awake to the dread results. But when we remember the vast and varied sources of peril, we rejoice to know that there may be immunity from all disaster. "Deliver us from evil" is the prayer taught us by the Saviour; and God will hear that prayer, for "thine is the power."

IV. THE WATCHFULNESS THAT NEVER SLEEPS. "By night and by day." In the darkness and in the night. For the darkness is no darkness to God. As Sentinel he never sleeps. Our watch-fires die out, and the beasts of the forest break into the camp in the silent hours of darkness. We cannot "keep." But the soul is too precious to be left to finite watchfulness. The Tower of London contains no jewelled crowns so rich in value as the nature that contains the pearl of great price. The temple of Jerusalem had costly vessels and sacred altars; but the temple of the soul has in it the true Shechinah. This is God's promise. This is his own testimony to himself; and it is a promise to wear as an amulet on the heart in such a world as this.—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—11.—*God's treatment of the rebellious and the riyhteous.* Amid the different and difficult interpretations and the numerous and dubious applications given to these verses, we may discern some truths respecting God's treatment of human character.

I. HIS TREATMENT OF THE WICKED. 1. *The sharpness of his instruments.* He punishes with "a sore and great and strong sword" (ver. 1). He "whets his glittering sword" (Deut. xxxii. 41). Out of the mouth of the Son of God "goeth a sharp

sword" (Rev. xix. 15). The various miseries, visitations, calamities, which come to us as the sad consequences of sin are God's sword—pain, sickness, separation, bereavement, famine, war, death, etc.; sore and sharp and strong are these. 2. *The thoroughness of his judgments.* It is not only that the blows he sends are severe, but his judgments are continued and are multiplied till all their punitive or corrective work is done. He will "*go through* the briars and thorns" which are spoiling his vineyard, and will *burn them together* (ver. 4). "The defenced city shall be desolate," so abandoned of man that the calf shall feed there and lie down and browse upon the branches, and these shall be so withered that the women shall come and "set them on fire" (vers. 10, 11). When headstrong and rebellious men defy the power and despise the Word of God, they find that they are contending with One whose correction is not confined to one or two blows. God pursues such men with his holy and righteous punishment, until the briars are consumed, until the city is desolate, until the haughty heart is humbled to the very dust. 3. *The opening which he offers them.* "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me," etc. (ver. 5). The most rebellious may return unto him: Ahab may humble his heart, Manasseh may repent, Saul the persecutor may become his most active servant, taking hold of his Divine magnanimity, which is the strength of the Divine character.

II. HIS TREATMENT OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *The care which he takes of them.* He turns the neglected wilderness into a cultivated vineyard (ver. 2); he, the Lord, does keep it night and day; he waters it every moment; he guards it against the despoiling enemy (ver. 3). God distinguishes his people by granting them peculiar privileges; he expends on them his watchful love; he guards them against their spiritual adversaries: they have to bless him for attention, for enrichment, for defence. 2. *The fact that he moderates his corrections of them.* (Vers. 7, 8.) He does not visit them with the severity he shows toward those who are defiant of his will; there is measure, limitation, in the day when the "east wind" of his chastisement is made to blow. God restrains his hand when it is his own children whom he is correcting (Ps. ciii. 8—10). 3. *The parental purpose of his chastisement.* (Ver. 9.) It is that iniquity may be purged, that the dark consequences and the evil stain of sin may be "taken away," that the degrading idolatries of the heart as well as of the life may be demolished; it is that those whom he loves may be cleansed from their impurities and may be his children indeed, not only enjoying his favour and dwelling beneath his roof, but bearing his likeness and fulfilling his will. 4 *The prosperity which he promises them.* (Ver. 6.) The prosperity which is *inward*, in "taking root," in laying hold of the regard and the affections of men; that also which is *outward*, in blossom and bud and widespread fruit, in commanding the honour and enjoying the blessings of the world.—C.

Ver. 5.—*Taking hold of God's strength.* How can man take hold of God's strength? The answer depends on the kind of strength which God is putting forth; and his strength is manifold. He is strong—

I. IN WISDOM, and the effectuating power which results therefrom. It is in virtue of his wisdom that the elements of nature have their various attributes, and the processes of nature their constant laws—that seeds sprout, and shrubs and trees bear flower and fruit; that living bodies grow, and minds advance, and souls mature. We take hold of God's strength of wisdom when we do our human, instrumental part in these his workings—when we plough and sow and weed; when we observe and study; when we use the privileges of devotion.

II. IN MAGNANIMITY. God is strong indeed in this grace. Provoked by everything in man that is fitted to arouse his anger, he has withheld his retributive hand (Ps. ciii. 10). He has not sentenced us to eternal exile; he has continued his loving-kindnesses even to the most obdurate and rebellious (Matt. v. 45). He has shown himself willing to receive again the sons and daughters that have wandered farthest away from his home. We take hold of this his strength when we avail ourselves of his merciful overtures, and hasten in penitence and faith to his feet.

III. IN COMPASSION. God is strong in pity. "Like as a father pitieth his children, *so* he pitieth," etc. His commiseration, his tenderness, his parental responsiveness to our various sorrows, is quick, is immediate, is perfect; there is great strength of loving sympathy in Jesus Christ (Heb. iv. 15). We take hold of his strength when, in our

dark days, in our heavier sorrows, we unburden our hearts to him, realize the fulness of his compassion, make our earnest, confident appeal for his sympathy and succour.

IV. IN UPHOLDING POWER. In such a world as this with all its allurements and its dangers, with such a nature as is ours with all its frailty, there is required great power to preserve us in our integrity and to build us up on the foundation of our faith. But God is able to do this; he is able to "make us stand" (Rom. xiv. 4), to "keep us from falling, and present us faultless," etc. (Jude 24). We take hold of his strength when we act with such obedience and wisdom that we place ourselves in the path where that power is acting—the path of reflection, of moral safety, of Christian fellowship, of worship, of holy activity.

V. IN TRANSFORMING POWER. It is impossible for us to make even Divine truth effectual to the regeneration of a sinful soul. But God is mightier than we; the things which are impossible to us are possible to him (Matt. xix. 26). His strength is not unequal even to the softening of the hard heart, the bending of the proud and stubborn will, even of the hardest and haughtiest of souls. We take hold of this his strength when we faithfully plead with our fellow-men that they should return to God, and when we earnestly plead with God that he should put into exercise that renewing and transforming energy.—C.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The return of God's absent ones.* In the relation of God to his people in exile, as depicted in these two verses, we may find a picture of the relation in which he stands to all his absent children.

I. THE BREADTH OF HIS KINGDOM: the broad fields of the husbandman, in which he might "beat off" fruit, from the far river in the East to the far river in the West—from end to end of the known earth. God's rights and claims extend to all peoples, to all classes, to men of every character and every temperament and every tongue, to both sexes; his empire, like his commandment, is "exceeding broad." He looks everywhere for fruit to be beaten off, to be gathered in, at the time of harvest.

II. THE NEED OF HIS INTERPOSITION. This fruit which God is seeking is spiritual; it is the reverence, the love, the worship, the obedience, of his own children. But these his sons and daughters are: 1. *Afar off.* They are outcasts, a long way from home. It is not geographical, but moral and spiritual distance which has to be deplored. They are in the "strange land" of doubt, of denial, of disobedience, of indifference and forgetfulness, of utter unlikeness to the heavenly Father. 2. Or they are *at the point of extinction.* "Ready to perish." Those who have not "bowed the knee to Baal," who have not been fascinated and won by ruinous seductions, are a mere remnant, and even their life, like Elijah's, is at stake. Everything cries for God's merciful interposition.

III. HIS SUMMONS TO RETURN. The "great trumpet" is being blown; its notes are sounding far and wide. "The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea," saying, "Return unto thy Rest;" "Come unto me, all ye that labour." From the "far country" of sin, of folly, of selfishness, of unrest, the summons calls all human hearts to leave behind them their sin, their misery, their bondage, and to cast themselves at the feet of the Divine Father, and beg to be taken back into that holy service which is perfect freedom.

IV. HIS DISTINGUISHING KINDNESS. "Ye shall be gathered *one by one.*" God does not content himself with issuing a general proclamation which each man may interpret and apply. He comes to every human soul himself. In the Person, and by the direct influence, of his Holy Spirit, he makes his appeal to the individual heart and conscience. He says, "Come *thou*, my child." "Return *thou*, my daughter." "My son, give me *thy* heart."

V. THE GATHERING-PLACE OF HIS RETURNED ONES. "Ye shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." All they who return unto God (1) gather at his house on earth for worship there; and (2) meet in the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, for "nobler worship there."—C.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Vineyard-keeping.* The vine is a familiar Bible figure for the pious individual; and the vineyard, or cluster of vines, an equally familiar figure of the Church. Several things make the figure specially suitable. The vine is a beautiful plant; it is dependent, and cannot be its best when standing alone; it brings forth

rich and abundant fruit; it needs constant and careful tending; its wood is useless for any other purpose than carrying the sap that flows through it; and it is exposed to peril from changing atmospheres and outward foes. To this last point of comparison these verses direct us. For the others such passages may be consulted as Ps. lxxx. 8—16; ch. v. 1—7. We note that vineyard-keeping includes—

I. TENDING. This is called to mind by the very strong assurance, "I will water it every moment," which is evidently meant to impress on us the constancy, the care, the gracious wisdom, the prompt helpfulness, of the Divine dealings with the Church. To our minds it has a somewhat exaggerated sound, but that is only because we have no associations with a parched, hilly, hot, and almost rainless country, such as Palestine or Egypt. Constant and abundant irrigation is the essential condition of vegetable life in such lands, and to it the science and practical skill of the people are devoted. Channels are made in which the water may run to the vineyards, and much of the gardener's skill is devoted to this regular and efficient watering. The Eastern idea of a fruitful tree is one "planted by the rivers of water;" "its leaf shall not wither." They who are thus careful about the watering of their vines will be sure to do everything else for them that is necessary for their well-being. They will gather out the stones, enrich the soil, clean the bine, prune luxurious growths, guide the trailing branches, and thin the crowded bunches. And so does the Lord of that vineyard, the Church, meet her needs at every point. That he should "water it every moment" suggests that his supreme care is for the renewal of her vitality, and assures us of his further care of all the forms and expressions of that vitality. We may be sure, in New Testament language, that with "his dear Son, God will freely give us all things." He will feed, he will correct, he will encourage, he will check. Whatsoever is needful for the wise tending of the Church, we may fully trust him that he will do, for he is a Master-gardener. In following out this thought, precise practical applications may be made to the conditions and necessities of the particular Church addressed.

II. WATCHING. "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Van Lennep tells us that "vineyards which are at a distance from a village require a constant watch and guard during the fruit season, or they are completely devoured by the jackals." Some of the very earliest Egyptian paintings are vivid-hued representations of trellised and festooned "vines," while, peering through the bough-twisted fences, is seen the sharp and mobile nose of the "fox," stealthily stealing towards his favourite repast. It is usual to dig a ditch all round the vineyard, into which stone posts are driven, branches are twisted in and out of these posts, and, as wild plants and briars soon grow up among them, a thick and solid fence or hedge is made. But the husbandman is obliged from time to time to examine all parts of the hedge, and close up any gap or breach made by the foxes, jackals, badgers, hares, hedgehogs, and perhaps even wild boars which, by trampling, destroy more than they eat. A frail shed raised on poles a good height is prepared for the defence of the vineyard, in it a watcher remains day and night while the fruit is ripening. From his elevated position he can see all over the vineyard, and arrangement is sometimes made for his signalling to the neighbouring village in case of emergency. He is provided with weapons suitable for dealing with the precise foes which he may have to encounter. These points will suggest the gracious forms in which God has ever defended his ancient Church. Historical illustrations may be given. What he has ever been, that he still is; and the individual Christian, as well as the Christian Church, may rest secure in his keeping. No foes can come nigh us that he will not see. None can prove stronger in attack than he in defence. Sometimes the Christian may, in his despairings, say after overworn David, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul;" but, with God's watching and keeping, he shall no more perish than David did. The Church, overestimating the force of evil at any given time, may cry that it "is in danger." It is always an untrustful cry, raised when men fail to look to the "Watcher in the booth," who keeps the vineyard night and day. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."—R. T.

Ver. 5.—*Making peace with God.* The Rev. T. Toller gives a very striking illus-

tration of the figure used in this verse. He says, "I think I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what has taken place within my own family. One of my little children had committed a fault, for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms and burst into tears. I would sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault; he had taken hold of my strength, and he had made peace with me." God, with whom sinful man is at war, alone can make peace; but he can, and he will. "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The text is suggestive of what would be understood as a "simple gospel sermon," and the main lines may be as follows:—

I. PEACE IS BROKEN BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. Right and comfortable relations depend on man's submission and obedience. Self-will and rebelliousness break up those relations. Man is God's child; peace depends on obedience. Man is God's servant; peace depends on doing the Master's will. The essence of sin is *wilfulness*.

II. GOD IS ABLE TO RESTORE THE BROKEN PEACE. He may be able as a matter of sovereignty; but it is more interesting to us to know that he is able through a scheme of peace-making which he has himself devised and carried out in the Person of his Son. "His own arm has brought salvation." Such aspects of the great atoning work may be here dwelt upon as most commend themselves to the preacher.

III. GOD ACTUALLY OFFERS RESTORATION OF THE BROKEN PEACE. He asks us to "lay hold of his strength;" he invites us to "come and reason with him;" he even grieves over our hesitancy, saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? why will ye die?" God hath offered to us—given to us—"eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

IV. THEY MUST BE RIGHT-HEARTED WHO SEEK TO MAKE PEACE WITH GOD. What is included in right-heartedness? 1. Humility. 2. Sense of sin. 3. Penitence. 4. Sign of earnestness in putting away sin. 5. Forsaking of self-trusts. 6. Fervent desire. 7. Whole-heartedness of purpose. "Ye shall seek me, and *find me*, when ye seek for me with your whole heart."—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The world-mission of Israel.* Just as "no man liveth unto himself," but every man liveth for the circle in which he is set, so no nation liveth unto itself—it liveth for the world of nations in its time, and for all the ages. This universal truth is illustrated for us in the case of prominent, or elect, or selected nations. Egypt keeps alive the sense of mystery for the world, the claims of the unknown. Chaldea pleads in all the world for the claims of human observation, for the basis-principle of science. Greece keeps up to-day its mission to the world, and preaches to us the claims of the "beautiful," the basis of all art, all ideal creations. Rome declares to the world the supreme importance of wise and stable government for the ordering of society. And Israel has its voice in every land and every age, pleading for the foundation-principles of religion, which are the *unity and spirituality of God*. Israel is a tree whose branches overspread the earth; these are its leaves, and these leaves are for the healing of the nations that are diseased and dying of idolatries and sensuousness. As we think of Israel after the flesh, we should remember that *we* are the true Israel, the spiritual Israel, who hold fast and testify for the old Mosaic truths, "God is One" and "God is a Spirit." The world-mission of Israel is—

I. TO PRESERVE THE WORLD'S TRUTH. That is, "*In the beginning God.*" This truth was given to man as man. It is man's birthright. When man became mentally and emotionally biassed by yielding to self-will and sin, this first truth was imperilled. If man, as God created him, had thought, he would only have thought of God, one God. When sinful man thinks, he runs along one or other of two lines—he either conceives of two gods, one presiding over pleasant things, and the other over disasters; or else he thinks of many gods, each one occupying a more or less limited sphere. So "monotheism" was put in peril, and had to be preserved through all the ages during which God left man to a free experiment of that self-willedness which he had chosen. In his infinite wisdom God preserved the essential and foundation-truths of religion for long ages in a direct Adamic line, giving to men length of life sufficient to permit of tradition covering the long generations up to the Flood. After the Flood,

God preserved the world's truth in the one Abrahamic family; and when that family grew into a nation, he made it, in a very solemn way, the depositary of the world's truth, and set it in a central land, where it might be but slightly influenced by the notions of surrounding nations. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." It is true that Israel did not prove faithful to its duty of preserving the world's truth; but after the chastisement of the Babylonian exile (and to that the prophet is referring in our text) they never fell into idolatry, and they exist to-day, scattered everywhere, but holding fast their trust of monotheistic truth.

II. TO EXHIBIT THE WORKING OF THAT TRUTH. "Example is better than precept." The world might fairly ask to see a national life raised on the foundation of belief in one unseen, spiritual God. Israel is that nation. It is in many respects a striking example. It failed only when it shifted from its foundation. A glance at the old world, which grouped round the eastern end of the Mediterranean, will show how central "little Palestine" was, so as to be in view of all the nations, as a "city set on a hill." The practical applications of this part of the subject are that *we* hold the trust of these truths, and of the yet further revelations that have been given; and the question of supreme interest to all around us is—Do they make us better men and women? Are others won to accept our truths because of the illustrations which *we* find for them in our lives and relations? Do we "walk worthy of our calling"?

III. TO WITNESS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD FOR THAT TRUTH. The presence of a Jew anywhere is a plea for belief in one God. The exaggerated stubbornness with which Jews plead for this truth prevents their being willing to receive the further revelation concerning the one God, that he has been manifest in the flesh. We who are the spiritual Jews have it as our work to proclaim "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" to all the nations. Jews have but half a mission now; but the time is coming when their veil shall be taken away; they shall see in Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God, and join with us in going out through all the world, and preaching the old truth and the new gospel to every creature.—R. T.

Vers. 7—9.—*Judgments and chastisements.* These verses set forth two modes of apprehending the afflictions and sorrows of life, and help us in estimating the distinction between the modes. We may say that it sets forth God's ways with the enemies of Israel, and God's ways with Israel.

I. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUDGMENTS AND CHASTISEMENTS. In a sense we may say that judgments are ends in themselves, and chastisements are means to a higher end. Then has God two ways of dealing with men? Thoughtlessly, and misled by appearances, many of us answer, "Yes," and suppose that we can account for some difficult and perplexing things by the help of this supposition. But this answer will not bear the test of either patient thought or Holy Scripture. Thought says, "God is One; truth and right are one; men are one; and, if there be two principles of dealing with the same creatures, both cannot be right." What God does may to us look different; it must really be the same, for the "God of the whole earth shall he be called." Scripture assures us of the Divine unchangeableness. It says, "One event happeneth to the righteous and to the wicked." It expresses the conviction that the "Judge of all the earth will do right." It bids us see that God makes his "sun to rise on the evil and on the good." There is no modification of ordinary natural conditions for the sake of the elect few. Health, accident, disease, death, affect alike the righteous and the wicked. Then comes in another question—Can *all* judgments be regarded as remedial in their design and tendency? There is a disposition toward the general acceptance of this theory nowadays; in dealing with crime, the reformation of the criminal is put in a first place. We may venture to say that God's *final* end is always recovery. But he works over indefinitely long periods; and his *immediate* ends—necessary as stages—may not always be remedial. As a part of the work towards securing the final end, God may stamp by suffering the quality of sin; he may demonstrate his indignations, as in the case of Babylon. It may even be necessary to make us fear lest the consequences of sin may prove irremediable; and this may explain such things as everlasting punishment, the sin against the Holy Ghost that hath never forgiveness, and the day of grace that may be lost. Whether

Divine dealings be judgment or chastisement may depend on three things: (1) the point from which they are viewed; (2) the moral condition of those who suffer; and (3) the relations of God being regarded as governmental or as paternal.

II. THE PURPOSE OF JUDGMENT APPREHENDED AS CHASTISEMENT. (Ver. 9.) Apprehended as only judgment, our mind is overborne by our calamity. Apprehended as chastisement, the mind is started with new and trustful thoughts. The trouble may at first crush, but soon we learn to accept it calmly. That we are under fatherly chastisements puts the deepest solemnity into *life* and into *sin;* it helps us to lift our hearts away from the present and the seen to the future and the unseen. All *deaths* become gates of life when this sunlight streams on them. (For this figure see Noel Paton's picture, 'Mors Janua Vita.') Prophecy then keeps before us this cheering fact—all anxieties and sufferings are *fatherly*. Their "fruit is to take away our sin." And as we so little know the subtleties of our sin, we need not wonder that we cannot understand either the subtleties or the severities necessary for taking it away. Our wonder ought to be that "refining fires," so graciously tempered for us, are made to accomplish so great a cleansing.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*Repentance proved in deeds.* The first clause may be translated thus: "On these terms shall the guilt of Jacob be purged." There must be the *signs* of reformation—the actual destruction of idols and all idol-associations, as the proof and manifestation of the declared heart-surrender of idolatry. The child's verse is correct theology and practical godliness—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before;
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

The very "stones of the altar" must be as "chalkstones that are beaten in sunder" if Jacob would make plain its repentance of its idolatries, and come to receive Divine forgiveness. Illustrations may be taken from the practical reformations on which Hezekiah and Josiah insisted as the outward signs of the national repentance. From this verse deal with the constant temptation to rest in mere sentiment, and impress the demand which God ever makes for proof in *act* of the repentance, or the faith, or the humility, or the zeal, that may be possessed. As our Saviour expressed the same point in another of its connections, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them."

I. GOOD SENTIMENTS ARE GOOD BEGINNINGS. Therefore in preachings and teachings appeal is properly made to feeling; effort is made to arouse emotions and to persuade. By the way of the heart access can often be gained to a man; and Scripture provides material for emotional appeals. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." To move feeling, and to awaken good sentiment, is at least to make a breach in the walls. It is a beginning, and there is hope of what may be further accomplished when such a beginning is made. But we should be alive to the constant disposition of men to *rest in sentiment*. There is a subtle pleasure in feeling deeply. We easily get a kind of satisfaction in our good sentiments; and so Scripture roughly shakes down the satisfaction by calling such things "refuges of lies," or staffs that pierce the hand that leans on them.

II. GOOD SENTIMENTS MAY SOON FADE. They always do when they remain as sentiments, and do not become motives to action. Our minds are constantly passing on to fresh things, and the older ones grow dim in the distance. If things are to keep up their interest, we must put continuous thought to them, and make them bear on daily conduct. We weep over a pathetic story-book, but in a little while all is forgotten as a dream when one awaketh. It would be a most humbling sight for us all if God were to show us the great heap of beautiful sentiments we once had and enjoyed.

III. GOOD SENTIMENTS HAVE NO VOICE THAT GOD CAN HEED. If we offer such things to him, he will entirely withdraw and hide himself within a cloud, and wait and see how long the good sentiment will last. Penitence that is only a sensational sigh or tear he will not regard. It means nothing. It is but a passing ripple on a pool. Why should he turn aside to notice that? This thought will unfold into a practical dealing with the danger of forced emotions in revivalistic services; or the

straining of religious feeling in children and young people. Mere emotion is too light a thing to ascend as prayer to the throne of God.

IV. GOOD SENTIMENTS MUST SPEAK TO GOD THROUGH DEEDS. You say you repent. But the supreme question is—What has your repentance made you do? You repent of that sin: then have you put it away? You repent of that wrong to your neighbour: then have you, as far as possible, put the wrong right? You repent of your idolatry: then have you broken up your idol-altars? Corresponding actions, "works meet for repentance,"—these are the terms of "purging;" this is the "fruit to take away all the sin."—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Restorations prove Divine forgiveness.* This is the answering truth to that dwelt on above, in the homily on ver. 9; God in his dealings with man never stops with sentiment. We know that he forgives us, because with the forgiveness he grants us restoration to his favour. Israel had grievously offended Jehovah by his unfaithfulness. Divine indignations had put the offending child away. But the child learned the lessons of judgment. The child came, penitent and humble, seeking forgiveness; and the Lord heard, granted the forgiveness, and sealed it in a gracious restoration. This is the vision of that great restoring-day. "They shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." Our Lord presented this truth in his exquisite picture of the prodigal son. The father forgives the penitent, and we might say, "That is enough; such a son can expect no more and deserves no more; forgiven, let him go away where he will." But love cannot stop at such limitations; it cannot be content until it can restore: it wants to seal its forgiveness; it would make it the fullest blessing possible; so the forgiven son is in his old place at the home-table; nay, he is even decked in the joy-robe, and made the occasion of a feast. He knows he is forgiven, for he is restored. In nothing do God's ways appear to be higher than man's ways than in this—God can restore when he forgives, and man halts at the restoring work; he is seldom grand enough for that. We cannot restore our criminals even when they are penitent. We cannot put back into her place in society the "woman a sinner," who bathes the feet of Jesus with penitential tears. The apostle makes an almost overwhelming demand on us when he says, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual *restore* such an one in the spirit of meekness." How souls yearn for this sealing of forgiveness is seen in David's prayer, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." The subject may be treated under two divisions.

I. DIVINE RESTORATION ASSURED IN EXAMPLES AND PROMISES. These assure us that it is God's way of dealing, and so they become a persuasion to *hope* even in our penitence, and in our prayer for forgiveness.

II. DIVINE RESTORATION REALIZED IN ACTUAL CIRCUMSTANCES. Not always outward circumstances; only so far as these may have been affected by the sin. Always in inward circumstances of mind and feeling.—R. T.

SECTION VII. RENEWED DENUNCIATIONS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH (CH. XXVIII.—XXXI.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Vers. 1—4.—A WARNING TO SAMARIA. The prophet has now cast his eagle glance over the whole world and over all time. He has denounced woe upon all the principal nations of the earth (ch. xiii.—xxiii.), glanced at the destruction of the world itself (ch. xxiv. 17—20), and sung songs over the establishment of Christ's kingdom, and the ingathering of the nations into it (ch. xxv.—xxvii.). In the present chapter he returns to the condition of things in his own time and among his own people. After a brief warning, addressed to Samaria, he turns to consider the condition of Judah, which he accuses of following the example of Samaria, of perishing through self-indulgence and lack of knowledge (vers. 7—12). He then proceeds to expostulate seriously with the "rulers of Jerusalem," on whom lies the chief responsibility for its future.

Ver. 1.—**Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards**; rather, *of the drunkards.*

The "drunkards of Ephraim," or of the ten tribes, were at once intoxicated with wine (Amos iv. 1; vi. 6) and with pride (Amos vi. 13). As the external aspect of affairs grew more and more threatening through the advances of Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser, they gave themselves up more and more to self-indulgence and luxury, lay upon beds of ivory, drank wine from bowls, feasted to the sound of the viol, and even invented fresh instruments of music (Amos vi. 4, 5). At the same time, they said in their hearts, "Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" (Amos vi. 13). They persisted in regarding themselves as secure, when even ordinary political foresight might have seen that their end was approaching. **Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower;** rather, *and to the fading flower of his glorious beauty.* The "glorious beauty" of Samaria was a beauty of magnificent luxury. "Summer" and "winter houses," distinct each from the other (Amos iii. 15); "ivory palaces" (1 Kings xxii. 39; Amos iii. 15); a wealth of "gardens, vineyards, fig-orchards, and oliveyards" (Amos iv. 9); residences of "hewn stone" (Amos v. 11); feasts enlivened with "the melody of viols" (Amos v. 23); "beds of ivory" (Amos vi. 4); "wine in bowls" (Amos. vi. 6); "chief ointments" (Amos vi. 6); constituted a total of luxurious refinement beyond which few nations had proceeded at the time, and which Isaiah was fain to recognize, in a worldly point of view, as "glorious" and "beautiful." But the beauty was of a kind liable to fade, and it was already fading under the sirocco of Assyrian invasion. **Which are on the head of the fat valleys;** rather, *which is on the head* (or, *which decks the head*) *of the rich valley.* Samaria was built on a hill of an oval form, which rose up in the midst of a fertile valley shut in by mountains. The prophet identifies the valley with the kingdom itself, and then personifies it, and regards its head as crowned by the fading flower of Samaria's beauty.

Ver. 2.—**The Lord hath a mighty and strong one.** God has in reserve a mighty power, which he will let loose upon Samaria. The wicked are "his sword" (Ps. xvii. 13), and are employed to carry out his sentences. In the present case the "mighty and strong one" is the Assyrian power. **As a tempest of hail, etc.** The fearfully devastating force of an Assyrian invasion is set forth under three distinct images—a hailstorm, a furious tempest of wind, and a violent inundation—as though so only could its full horror be depicted. War is always a horrible scourge; but in ancient times, and with a people so cruel as the Assyrians, it was a calamity exceeding in terribleness the utmost that the modern reader can conceive. It involved the wholesale burning of cities and villages, the wanton destruction of trees and crops, the slaughter of thousands in battles and sieges, the subsequent massacre of hundreds in cold blood, the plunder of all classes, and the deportation of tens of thousands of captives, who were carried into hopeless servitude in a strange land. **With the hand;** *i.e.* "with force," "violently." So in Assyrian constantly (compare the use of the Greek χερί).

Ver. 3.—**The crown of pride, the drunkards;** rather, *of the drunkards* (comp. ver. 1). The "crown of pride" is scarcely "Samaria," as Delitzsch supposes. It is rather the self-complacent and boastful spirit of the Israelite people, which will be "trodden under foot" by the Assyrians.

Ver. 4.—**And the glorious beauty, etc.** Translate, *And the fading flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be like an early fig (that comes) before the harvest.* Such an "early fig" is a tempting delicacy, devoured as soon as seen (comp. Hos. ix. 10; Nah. iii. 12; Jer. xxiv. 2, etc.). The "beauty" of Samaria would tempt the Assyrians to desire it so soon as they saw it, and would rouse an appetite which would be content with nothing less than the speedy absorption of the coveted morsel. Samaria's siege, once begun, was pressed without intermission, and lasted less than three years (2 Kings xviii. 9, 10)—a short space compared to that of other sieges belonging to about the same period; *e.g.* that of Ashdod, besieged twenty-nine years (Herod., ii. 157); that of Tyre, besieged thirteen years ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. iii. 492).

Vers. 5, 6.—THE FALL OF SAMARIA COINCIDENT WITH AN OFFER OF FAVOUR TO JUDAH. Her sister's fate was the most powerful of all possible warnings to Judah against treading in her steps. Samaria had perished through want of faith in Jehovah. She had turned to other gods; she had trusted in her own "glory" and "beauty;" and she had trusted in Egypt. If Judah would do the exact opposite, she might be saved. If she would take Jehovah for her "Crown of glory" and "Diadem of beauty," he was willing to be so taken. He was willing to impart a "spirit of judgment" to her rulers, and "strength" to her armed force.

Ver. 5.—**In that day shall the Lord of hosts be, etc.** This is an offer, and something more than an offer. It is implied that, to some extent, the offer would be accepted. And clearly the closing of the clouds around Samaria was coincident with the dawn of a brighter day in Judah. Hezekiah came to the throne only three years

before the fatal siege of Samaria began. His accession must have been nearly contemporaneous with that expedition of Shalmaneser against Hoshea, when he "shut him up, and bound him in prison" (2 Kings xvii. 4). Yet he was not daunted by his neighbour's peril. He began his reign with a political revolution and a religious reformation. He threw off the yoke of Assyria, to which his father had submitted (2 Kings xviii. 7), and he cleared the land of idols and idol-worship. It was the dawn of a day of promise, such as the prophet seems to point to in these two verses. Unhappily, the dawn was soon clouded over (vers. 7—9). **The residue of his people**; *i.e.* Judah. All admit that "they also," in ver. 7, refers to Judah, and Judah only; but the sole antecedent to "they also" is this mention of the residue of God's people.

Ver. 6.—**For a spirit of judgment.** How far Judah had departed from the spirit of just judgment was made apparent in the very opening chapter of Isaiah's prophecy (vers. 15—27). **To him that sitteth in judgment**; rather, *that sitteth on the judgment-seat* (Cheyne). **For strength to them that turn the battle to the gate**; *i.e.* "to those who repulse an enemy, and drive him back to his own city's gate" (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 8. "He smote the Philistines, even *unto Gaza*").

Vers. 7—10.—JUDAH'S SINFULNESS. The reformation effected by Hezekiah was but a half-reformation. It put away idolatry, but it left untouched a variety of moral evils, as: 1. Drunkenness. Judah was no whit behind Ephraim in respect of this vice. The very priests and "prophets" gave way to the disgusting habit, and came drunk to the most solemn functions of religious teaching and hearing causes. 2. Scorn and mockery of God's true prophets. The teaching of Isaiah was made light of by the officials of the priestly and prophetic orders, who claimed to be quite as competent to instruct men in their duties as himself. They seem to have ridiculed the mode of his teaching—its catch-words, as they thought them, and its insistence on minutiæ.

Ver. 7.—**They also.** Judah, no less than Ephraim (see vers. 1, 3). It has been questioned whether literal intoxication is meant, and suggested that Judah "imitated the pride and unbelief and *spiritual intoxication* of Ephraim" (Kay). But the numerous passages which tax both the Israelites and the Jews of the period with drunkenness (ch. v. 11, 22; xxii. 13; lvi. 12; Hos. iv. 11; vii. 5; Amos vi. 6, etc.), are best understood literally. Orientals (*e.g.* the Persians) are often given to such indulgence. **Have erred through wine**; rather, *reel with wine.* **Are out of the way**; or, *stagger.* The verbs express the physical effects of intoxication. **The priest and the prophet.** Priests were forbidden by the Law to drink any wine or strong drink previously to their taking part in the service of the tabernacle (Lev. x. 9), and the prohibition was always understood to apply *a fortiori* to the temple (Ezek. xliv. 21). Prophets might have been expected to act in the spirit of the command given to priests. By "prophets" here Isaiah means, not persons especially called of God, but official members of the prophetical order. Of these there were always many in Judah, who had no strong sense of religion (see ch. xxix. 10; Jer. v. 13, 31; Ezek. xiii. 2—16; Amos ii. 12; Micah iii. 11; Zeph. iii. 4, etc.). **They err in vision**; rather, *they reel in the vision.* They are drunken, even in the very exercise of their prophetical office—when they see, and expound, their visions. **They stumble in judgment**; or, *they stagger when pronouncing judgment* (Delitzsch). Persons in authority had been specially warned not to drink wine before the hearing of causes (Prov. xxxi. 4, 5).

Ver. 8.—**So that there is no place clean.** This is probably the true meaning, though the prophet simply says, "There is no place" (comp. ch. v. 8).

Ver. 9.—**Whom shall he teach?** A sudden and abrupt transition. The best explanation seems to be that suggested by Jerome, and followed by Bishop Lowth and most commentators, viz. that the prophet dramatically introduces his adversaries as replying to him with taunting speeches. "Whom does he think he is teaching?" they ask. "Mere children, just weaned from their mother's milk, and taken away from the breast? Does he forget that we are grown men—nay, priests and prophets? And what poor teaching it is! What 'endless petty teazing'! (Delitzsch)—precept upon precept," etc. The intention is to throw ridicule upon the smallness and vexatious character of the prophet's interminable and uninterrupted chidings (Delitzsch). **Knowledge . . . doctrine.** Technical terms in Isaiah's teaching, which his adversaries seem to have ridiculed as "catch-words." The term translated "doctrine" means properly "tidings," and involves the idea that the prophet obtained the teaching so designated by direct revelation from God.

Ver. 10.—**For precept must be upon precept**; rather, *for it is precept upon precept* (Lowth, Cheyne). The whole teaching is nothing but an accumulation of precept upon precept, rule upon rule, one little injunction followed up by another, here

little, there a little. The objectors profess to find in the prophet's teaching nothing grand, nothing broad—no enunciation of great leading principles; but a perpetual drizzling rain of petty maxims and rules, vexatious, cramping, confining; especially unsuitable to men who had had the training of priests and prophets, and could have appreciated a grand theory, or a new religious standpoint, but were simply revolted at a teaching which seemed to them narrow, childish, and wearisome. It has been said that in the language of this passage "we may hear the heavy babbling utterance of the drunken scoffers" (Delitzsch); but in this we have perhaps an over-refinement. Isaiah probably gives us, not what his adversaries said of him over their cups, but the best arguments which they could hit on in their sober hours to depreciate his doctrine. The arguments must be allowed to be clever.

Vers. 11—13.—JUDAH'S PUNISHMENT. God will retort on the Jews their scorn of his prophet, and, as they will not be taught by his utterances, which they find to be childish and unrefined, will teach them by utterances still more unrefined—those of the Assyrians, which will be quite as monotonous and quite as full of minutiæ as Isaiah's.

Ver. 11.—**With stammering lips and with another tongue.** The Assyrian language, though a Semitic idiom nearly allied to Hebrew, was sufficiently different to sound in the ears of a Jew like his own tongue mispronounced and barbarized.

Ver. 12.—**To whom he said; rather,** *because he said to them.* God had from remote times offered to his people "rest" and "refreshing"—or a life of ease and peace in Palestine—but on condition of their serving him faithfully and observing his Laws (Deut. xxviii. 1—14). But they had rejected this "rest," since they had refused to observe the condition on which it was promised. *Because* they had thus acted, God now brought upon them war and a conqueror.

Ver. 13.—**The word of the Lord was to them;** rather, *shall be to them.* God will now speak to them, not by his prophet, but by the Assyrian conqueror, who will do what they said Isaiah had done, *i.e.* lay upon them command after command, rule after rule, a constant series of minute injunctions, under which they will chafe and fret and at last rebel, but only to be "snared and taken." It is uncertain whether the reference is to the immediate future and to the Assyrians proper only, or whether the Babylonians are not taken into account also, and their oppression of Judæa pointed to. The yoke of Babylon was probably quite as difficult to endure as that of Assyria; and we find that, in the space of eighteen years, it produced at least three rebellions.

Vers. 14—22.—THE REBUKE OF JUDAH'S NOBLES. The power of the nobles under the later Jewish monarchy is very apparent throughout Isaiah's prophecy. It is they, and not the king, who are always blamed for bad government (ch. i. 10—23; iii. 12—15, etc.) or errors of policy (ch. ix. 15, 16; xxii. 15—19, etc.). Isaiah now turns from a denunciation of the priests and prophets, who especially opposed his teaching, to a threatening of the great men who guided the course of public affairs. He taxes them with being "men of scorn" (ver. 14), *i.e.* scorners of Jehovah, and with "a proud and insolent self-confidence" (Delitzsch). They have made, or are about to make, secret arrangements which will, they believe, secure Judæa against suffering injury at the hands of the Assyrians, and are quite satisfied with what they have done, and fear no evil. Isaiah is instructed that their boasted arrangements will entirely fail in the time of trial—their "refuge" (Egypt) will be found a refuge of lies (ver. 17), and the "overflowing scourge" (Assyria) will pass through the land, and carry all before it (ver. 18). There will then ensue a time of "vexation" and discomfort (vers. 19, 20)—God's anger will be poured out upon the land in strange ways (ver. 21). He therefore warns the rulers to lay aside their scorn of God, and humble themselves, lest a worse thing happen to them (ver. 22).

Ver. 14.—**Ye scornful men;** literally, *ye men of scorn.* The word used is rare, but will be found in the same sense in Prov. i. 22 and xxix. 8. A cognate participle occurs in Hos. vii. 5. **That rule this people.** (On the authority of the nobles at this period, see the introductory paragraph.)

Ver. 15.—**We have made a covenant with death** (comp. Job v. 23; Hos. ii. 18). The words are a boast, expressed somewhat enigmatically, that they have secured their own safety by some secret agreement. The exact nature of the agreement they are disinclined to divulge. **With hell are we at agreement.** A "synonymous parallelism," merely strengthening the previous assertion. **When the overflowing scourge shall pass through.** Assyrian invasion has been compared to a "flood" (ch. viii. 7; xxviii. 2), and to a "rod" or "staff" in ch. x. 24. Here

the two metaphors are joined together. **It shall not come to us.** Some means will be found—what, they do not say, either for diverting the flood, or for stemming it. **For we have made lies our refuge.** Here the Divine reporter departs from the language of those whose words he is reporting, and substitutes his own estimate of the true nature and true value of that "refuge" on which they placed such entire reliance. It appears by ch. xxx. 1—7 and ch. xxxvi. 6—9 that that refuge was Egypt. Now, Egypt was a "bruised reed," not to be depended on for keeping her engagements. To trust in her was to put confidence in "lies" and "falsehood."

Ver. 16.—**Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone.** In contrast with the insecure refuge and false ground of confidence whereon the nobles relied, the prophet puts forward the one sure "Rock" on which complete dependence may be placed—which he declares that Jehovah is laying, or "has laid," in Zion as **a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.** The imagery is, no doubt, drawn from the practice of Oriental kings, and notably Solomon, to employ foundation-stones of enormous size and weight at the corners of buildings. Some of those uncovered at the corners of Solomon's temple by the Palestine Exploration Fund are more than thirty-eight feet long, and weigh above a hundred tons (see 'Our Work in Palestine,' pp. 38, 115). But the reference cannot, of course, be to the material structure of the temple as Israel's true refuge. Rather, Jehovah himself would seem to be the Rock (ch. xxvi. 4; xxx. 29, etc.) intended; and hence the application to Christ by the writers of the New Testament (Rom. ix. 33; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 6—8) was natural and easy. But it may be questioned whether the passage was to Isaiah himself "Messianic," or meant more than that God had set his Name and his presence at Jerusalem from the time that the temple was built there, and that it was a mistake to look elsewhere than to him for deliverance or security. **He that believeth shall not make haste.** The LXX. have "He that believeth shall not *be ashamed*" or "*confounded*;" and St. Paul (Rom. ix. 33) follows this rendering. It is conjectured that the Hebrew had originally *yâbish* instead of *yâhîsh*.

Ver. 17.—**Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;** rather, *justice also will I set for my rule, and righteousness for my plumb-line;* i.e. I will execute justice and judgment on the earth with all strictness and exactness. The scorners had implied that, by their clever devices, they would escape the judgment of God (ver. 15). **The hail** (comp. ver. 2). The storm of Assyrian invasion will overwhelm Egypt, which is a "refuge of lies," false and untrustworthy (see the comment on ver. 15). **The hiding-place.** Mr. Cheyne adds, "of falsehood," supposing a word to have fallen out of the text. Such an addition seems almost required to complete the parallelism of the two clauses, and also for the balance between this verse and ver. 15.

Ver. 18.—**And your covenant with death shall be disannulled;** or, *wiped out.* The entire clever arrangement, by which they thought to avert the danger from themselves and from Judæa, shall come to nought. **When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.** As the prophet continues, his metaphor becomes still more mixed. "Treading down" was so familiar an expression for destroying, that, perhaps, its literal sense was overlooked (comp. ch. v. 5; vii. 25; x. 6; Dan. viii. 13; Micah vii. 10; Zech. x. 5, etc.).

Ver. 19.—**From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you;** rather, *as often as it passes along, it shall take you away;* i.e. as often as the flood of Assyrian invasion sweeps through Palestine, it shall thin the population by death and captivity. We know of at least eight passages of the flood through Judæa—one under Sargon, two under Sennacherib, three or four under Esarhaddon, and two under Asshur-bani-pal. There may have been more. **Morning by morning;** *i.e.* frequently—time after time. **Shall it pass over;** rather, *pass along*, or *pass through.* **It shall be a vexation only to understand the report;** rather, *it will be sheer terror to understand the doctrine.* There is an allusion to ver. 9. They had thought scorn of Isaiah's "doctrine," when he taught it them by word of mouth; they will understand it but too well, and find it "nothing but a terror," when it is impressed on them by the preaching of facts.

Ver. 20.—**For the bed, etc.** We have a proverb, "As a man makes his bed, so must he lie in it." The Jews will have made themselves a bed in which they can have no comfort or ease, and consequently no rest. But they will only have themselves to blame for it.

Ver. 21.—**The Lord shall rise up as in Mount Perazim.** The "Mount Perazim" of this passage is probably the same as the "Baal-Perazim" of 1 Chron. xiv. 11, where David completely defeated the Philistines by the Divine help. This victory is connected with another over the same nation in the valley of Gibeon (1 Chron. xiv. 13—16). Now, however, God was to be on the side of the enemies of his people, who were to suffer as the Philistines had suffered in the olden time. This punishment of his own people by the sword of foreigners was strange

work on God's part—a strange act. But it was their strange conduct which caused God's strange action. They had become, as it were, Philistines.

Ver. 22.—**Be ye not mockers.** As they had shown themselves previously (vers. 9, 10). **Lest your bands be made strong**; or, *lest your fetters grow strong.* The prophet views Judah as still, to some extent, an Assyrian dependency, held in light bonds; and warns his countrymen that an attempt to break the light bonds may result in Assyria's making them stronger and heavier. **A consumption, . . . determined upon the whole earth**; rather, *a consummation* (comp. ch. x. 22, 23).

Vers. 23—29.—A PARABLE TO COMFORT BELIEVERS. Isaiah is always careful to intermingle promises with his threats, comfort with his denunciations. Like his great Master, of whom he prophesied, he was fain not to "break the bruised reed" or "quench the smoking flax." When he had searched men's wounds with the probe, he was careful to pour in oil and wine. So now, having denounced the sinners of Judah through three long paragraphs (vers. 7—22), he has a word of consolation and encouragement for the better disposed, whose hearts he hopes to have touched and stirred by his warning. This consolation he puts in a parabolic form, leaving it to their spiritual insight to discover the meaning.

Ver. 23.—**Give ye ear** (comp. Ps. xlix. 1; lxxviii. 1). A preface of this kind, enjoining special attention and thought, was appropriate to occasions when instruction was couched in a parabolic form.

Ver. 24.—**Doth the plowman plow all day?** The Church of God, so often called a vineyard, is here compared to an arable field, and the processes by which God educates and disciplines his Church are compared to those employed by man in the cultivation of such a piece of ground, and the obtaining of a harvest from it. First of all, the ground must be ploughed, the face of the earth "opened" and the "clods broken." This, however, does not go on for ever; it is for an object—that the seed may be sown; and, as soon as the ground is fit for the sowing to take place, the preparation of the soil ceases. **Doth he open and break,** etc.? Harrowing succeeds to ploughing in the natural order of things, the object of the harrowing being to break and pulverize the clods.

Ver. 25.—**When he hath made plain the face thereof**; *i.e.* levelled it—brought the ground to a tolerably even surface. **Doth he not cast abroad the fitches?** The Hebrew word translated "fitches"—*i.e.* "vetches"—is *qetsach*, which is generally allowed to represent the *Nigella sativa*, a sort of ranunculus, which is cultivated in many parts of the East for the sake of its seeds. These are black, and have an aromatic flavour. Dioscorides (iii. 83) and Pliny (xix. 8) say that they were sometimes mixed with bread. **And scatter the cummin.** "Cummin" (*Cuminum sativum*) is "an umbelliferous plant, something like fennel." The seeds—or rather, berries—have "a bitterish warm taste, with an aromatic flavour" ('Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 372). They seem to have been eaten as a relish with various kinds of food. **And cast in the principal wheat**; rather, *and put in wheat in rows.* Drill-ploughs, which would deposit grain *in rows*, were known to the Assyrians ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 198). **And the rie in their place.** *Cussemeth*, the word translated "rie," is probably the *Holeus sorghum*, or "spelt," which is largely cultivated in Palestine and other parts of the East, and is the ordinary material of the bread eaten by the poorer classes (see the 'Pulpit Commentary' on Exodus, pp. 219, 220). For "in their place," Kay translates, "in its own border." The wheat and the barley and the spelt would all be sown separately, according to the direction of Lev. xix. 19, "Thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed."

Ver. 26.—**For his God doth instruct him.** Through the reason which God has given to men, they deal thus prudently and carefully with the pieces of land which they cultivate.

Ver. 27.—**For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing-instrument.** The *Nigella sativa* is too tender a plant to be subjected to the rude treatment of a threshing-instrument, or "threshing-sledge." Such instruments are of the coarsest and clumsiest character in the East, and quite inapplicable to plants of a delicate fabric. Karsten Niebuhr thus describes the Arabian and Syrian practices: "Quand le grain doit être battu, les Arabes de Yemen posent le blé par terre en deux rangées, épis contre épis, après quoi ils font trainer par-dessus *une grosse pierre* tirée par deux bœufs. La machine dont on se sert en Syrie consiste en *quelques planches* garnies par-dessous d'une quantité de pierres à fusil" ('Description de l'Arabie,' p. 140). **Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin.** The allusion is to another coarse mode of threshing practised in Palestine and elsewhere, by driving a cart with broad wheels over the grain. **But the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.** Canon Tristram says, "While the cummin can

easily be separated from its case by a slender rod, the harder pod of the *Nigella* requires to be beaten by a stout staff" ('Natural History of the Bible,' p. 445).

Ver. 28.—**Bread corn is bruised**; literally, *bread*; but no doubt the corn, from which bread is made, is meant. Most critics regard the clause as interrogative, "Is bread corn bruised?"—and the answer as given in the negative by the rest of the sentence, "No; he will not continue always threshing it, nor crunch it with his cart-wheel and his horses—he will not bruise it." Even where the rougher modes of threshing are employed, there is moderation in their employment. Care is taken not to injure the grain. Here the main bearing of the whole parable appears. The afflictions which God sends upon his people are adapted to their strength and to their needs. In no case are they such as to crush and injure. Only such violence is used as is required to detach the good seed from the husks. Where the process is most severe, still the "bread-corn" is not "bruised."

Ver. 29.—**This also** (comp. ver. 26). This prudent dealing of the husbandman with his produce is the result of the wisdom implanted in him by God. The prophet goes no further, but leaves his disciples to draw the conclusion that God's own method of working will be similar. **Wonderful in counsel** (comp. ch. ix. 6). **Excellent in working**; rather, *great in wisdom* (comp. Job vi. 13; xii. 16; Prov. ii. 7; iii. 21; viii. 14; xviii. 1; Micah vi. 9). Prov. viii. 14 is especially in point, since there the same two qualities are ascribed to God as in the present passage.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1, 3.—*The drunkards of Ephraim.* While Scripture, from first to last, upholds the moderate use of wine as cheering and "making glad the heart of man," it is distinct and severe in its denunciations of drunkenness and unrestrained revelry. The son who was "stubborn and rebellious, a glutton and a drunkard," was to be brought by his parents before the elders under the Jewish Law, and "stoned with stones that he might die" (Deut. xxi. 20, 21). Nabal's drunkenness and churlishness together caused him to be "smitten by the Lord that he died" (1 Sam. xxv. 38). Solomon warns his son against drunkenness by reminding him of the fact, which experience had sufficiently proved by his time, that "the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (Prov. xxiii. 21). The "drunkards of Ephraim" are denounced in unsparing terms by Isaiah and Amos. Christians are taught that drunkards "shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10), and bidden, "If any man that is called a brother be a drunkard, with such a one, no, not to eat" (1 Cor. v. 11). Drunkenness and gluttony are naturally coupled together, as being each of them an abuse of God's good gifts to man; but drunkenness is far the worse of the two, since, by robbing man of his self-control, it is apt to lead him on to a number of other sins and crimes, and thus, while not perhaps worse in itself, it is in its consequences far more injurious than gluttony. Drunkenness is often pleaded as an excuse for the crimes whereto it leads; but some of the wisest amongst ancient legislators were so far from accepting this plea, that they doubled the penalty for an offence if a man was drunk when he committed it (Arist., 'Eth. Nic.,' iii. 5, § 8). In the case of the "drunkards of Ephraim," it may be suspected that the desire to drown their cares in wine was at the root of their drunkenness (comp. ch. xxii. 13; Prov. xxxi. 6, 7). But, however we may pity those who so act, we cannot excuse them. Difficulties are a call upon us to use to the utmost the intellect wherewith we are endowed by God, if so be we may anyhow devise an escape from our troubles—not a reason for our pushing reason from its seat, and rushing blindfold on calamity.

Vers. 9, 10.—*The objections of unbelievers to such as preach the truth.* The *argumentum ad hominem*, to which Isaiah's adversaries had recourse, is one very generally employed by those who are indisposed to receive religious teaching. "Who are you," the teacher is asked, "that you should set yourself up to teach us? On what grounds do you suppose that you are so much wiser than we? We are not babes—not tied to our mothers' apron-strings, not mere children without experience of life. We think that probably we know quite as much on any religious subject as you. Why should you imagine that we do not?" It is difficult to meet this objection. By setting up to be a religious teacher a man does certainly claim to be wiser than his neighbours,

and a *primâ facie* objection of undue self-assertion most decidedly lies against him. He can only meet this objection by disclaiming all personal merit, and declaring himself a mere mouthpiece of One infinitely above him, whose doctrine he is commissioned to spread. The objectors will then have to question either the fact of his commission or the authority of the Person who gave it. Another line of argument, and a very common one, is to turn the doctrine itself into ridicule. Has the teacher nothing more to say than what has been heard so often?—nothing but little rules, petty precepts, minute directions for conduct, a touch here, a touch there, tiresome trivialities? Has he no new grand scheme to propound, no fresh way of salvation, no interesting "Church of the Future"? Surely it is idle to repeat, over and over again, the same stale maxims, the same well-worn rules! Who will listen to a harper who harps always on one string? Something new, something lively, something out of the common, is wanted, if the preacher is to secure attention; still more, if he is to affect conduct. Unfortunately, what is new is seldom true; and though, no doubt, novelty in treatment is to a certain extent desirable, since the "instructed scribe" should know how "to bring out of his treasure things old *and new*" (Matt. xiii. 52), yet it is the old truths which alone have power, which alone can save; and these need to be perpetually impressed on men, "in season and out of season," dinned into their ears, forced on their attention, cut into their hearts by stroke after stroke, even at the risk of its wearying them.

Vers. 14—22.—*The judgment prepared for scorners.* "Scorners," in the language of Scripture, are those who set at nought God's prophets, or his messages, or his Holy Word, or his Church, or his ministers. Men delight in such scorn because it seems to them so fine a thing, so grand a thing, so bold, so brave, so heroic. It is a poor thing, comparatively, to exalt one's self against man; it is magnificent to measure one's strength with God's, and enter the lists against *him*. This may, no doubt, be so in one point of view, and for a time, while God chooses to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. But nothing can be really grand or heroic which is irrational, absurd, doomed to end in failure, shame, and ruin. There is nothing admirable in a child kicking against the commands of a wise father, or in a schoolboy setting at nought the rules of grammar or of conduct given him by a good schoolmaster. It is the true wisdom of those who know themselves to be weak, and ignorant, and short-sighted, and imperfect, and liable to error, to accept loyally the rule of an authority stronger and wiser and better than themselves. The "scorners" find in a little time that their resistance of God is folly.

I. THEIR EARTHLY RELIANCE FAILS THEM. This reliance may be (1) physical force—the fact they have at their beck and call vast armies, a numerous police, a well-filled treasury, important allies, and the like; or (2) intellectual power, a consciousness of a reserve of mental strength in themselves, an indomitable will, a keen intellect, a fertile imagination, great logical acumen, etc. But their hold on all such things is uncertain. Armies revolt, melt away by sickness and desertion, suffer defeat, become demoralized, surrender themselves; a police fails and fraternizes with revolution; a treasury becomes exhausted; allies draw back in the hour of danger, as the Egyptians did in Israel's greatest need; and the mighty potentate who has scorned God and his laws finds himself, together with his advisers, brought to shame, defeated, ruined. So with the "scorners" whose mental pride has puffed them up. God can abase them in a moment by mental disease, brain-softening, paralysis, sense of depression, disgust with life. How the bold atheist trembles, and wishes that he could retract his daring speeches, when he is struck down by sickness, crippled, bed-ridden, palsied perhaps. God does not always launch his bolts in this life; but he can at any time do so, and he does it with sufficient frequency to leave men without excuse if they do not note, and profit, by his warnings.

II. AN EXTERNAL DANGER THREATENS. No one is safe from the worst forms of human suffering. Temporal ruin may come upon the rich, disfavour and unpopularity upon the long-applauded statesman, domestic woe, severe illness, excruciating pain, upon any one. In every case there is always death threatening men. Some "overflowing scourge" or other is almost sure, sooner or later, to "pass through," and press upon us, and threaten to bring us down to the ground. The scorner trembles when such an hour arrives, and inwardly confesses his impotency, even if outwardly he wear a front of brass, and professes to fear neither God nor man.

III. CALAMITY SWOOPS DOWN AT LAST. Even if no special judgment is sent to

punish the scorner, there arrives at last of necessity the time of old age, weakness, weariness; there arrives at last death; and, some time before death, the fear of death. The scorner must go to that God whose message he has scorned, whose messengers he has treated with contempt and contumely. "A consummation is decreed." He must "fall into the hands of the living God"! Then the folly of that "brave" conduct on which he prided himself becomes apparent, and he would fain retract his old speeches, and submit himself, and make his peace. But the words addressed to scorners (Prov. i. 22) sound in his ears and hold him back: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. i. 24—32).

Vers. 24—28.—*The analogy of Divine to human methods of working.* Isaiah's comparison in this chapter rests wholly upon the assumption of an analogy between God's dealings and man's, when the latter are such as are consonant with reason. Reason, the highest gift of God to man, he assumes to be an adumbration of some quality in the Divine nature, which bears a real resemblance to it. Reason "cometh forth from the Lord of hosts." It is the voice of God speaking in the soul of man. Let man follow it, and his actions are divinely guided. God's mode of action in parallel matters may be gathered from his. The general principle is involved in the particular analogy here indicated. As in human husbandry, so in God's tendance of that Church, which is his "vineyard" and "fruitful field," there are three principal processes.

I. THE PREPARATION OF THE GROUND. Israel was prepared by the long course of Egyptian affliction, by the "ploughshares" and "harrows" of tyrannical overseers and taskmasters, which broke up and pulverized what would otherwise have been an ungenial and unpromising soil, very unapt to bear fruit. After this preparation had been made for four hundred and thirty years, there followed—

II. THE PUTTING IN OF THE SEED. God's revelation of himself and of his will at Sinai was the sowing of the seed of his Word in the soil of Israel's hearts. When he had sufficiently prepared the soil, he scattered the seed abundantly—seed of various kinds—which all fell in its "appointed place," and did its appointed work, "turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and differencing the Jews from their neighbours by a higher moral tone and a purer religion than prevailed elsewhere. Finally came—

III. THE GATHERING IN OF THE HARVEST. The seed is sown for the sake of the crop which it will produce. God is continually gathering in his crop by a process analogous to that which men pursue. He needs good grain for his garner, and to obtain this he must separate the grain from the husks and chaff with which it is accompanied. As men use various methods for this object, some gentler, some severer, so God, too, in the purifying of his grain, has many varieties of treatment. To each kind of grain he applies the treatment that is fittest. Some kinds are lightly beaten, as with slender rods; others more heavily, as with stout staves; some, on the other hand, are threshed, as it were, with spiked drags and rollers, to clear them of their encumbrances. No more force, however, is applied in any case than is necessary, nor is any force applied for a longer time than is needed. And even in the severest treatment there is gentleness. God has a care that the good grain shall never be "bruised."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Condition of Samaria.* I. DENUNCIATION OF WOE. The condition of Samaria was like that of Jerusalem. And judgment must first fall upon Samaria, and

then upon Jerusalem (ch. viii. 6; cf. Micah i. 6). Drunkenness is named, "not as the root of the national evil, but rather as its flower. The appalling thing is that when all is on the point of collapsing, those responsible for the state should be given up to careless self-indulgence" (Cheyne). Samaria is described as the city of the "proud crown." So in Greece Athens was called the city of the violet crown, and Thebes the "well-crowned." Some explain the crown of the towers; others think that the mere beauty of the hill on which the city stands, with its cultivated terraces, covered with corn and with fig and olive trees, has given rise to the figure. But a worm is at the root of all this beauty, and Samaria must die. Drunkenness may stand for sensuality in general, which saps the root of a nation's life. The crown, or chaplet, alludes also to the custom among Greeks, Romans, and Jews, of wearing a chaplet of flowers at feasts. In the Book of Wisdom we read—

> "Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments:
> And let no flower of the spring pass by us:
> Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds, before they be withered."
> (Wisd. ii. 8.)

II. THE IMPENDING DESTRUCTION. Jehovah has an unflinching instrument for destruction. And, like an overwhelming tempest and flood of waters, destruction will come down on the devoted city. The bright crown shall be trampled underfoot; and Ephraim's beauty shall be swallowed up with all the haste with which one devours the special delicacy of the "early fig" (cf. Hos. ix. 10; Micah vii. 1; Nah. iii. 12; Jer. xxiv. 2). It ripens in June. The whole is a picture of sudden and utter destruction. (For the Assyrian king as agent in the hand of Jehovah, cf. 2 Kings xvii. 3—6. For the storm of hail as a symbol of desolation, cf. Job xxvii. 21; Hos. xiii. 15. And for the flood as a representation of hostile devastation, cf. Ps. xcv. 5; Jer. xlvi. 7, 8.) In the moral order, sudden destruction is always connected with great impiety. The triumphing of the wicked is short; and while they speak of peace, sudden destruction arriveth. "What Isaiah declared about the kingdom of Israel applies also to the whole world. By their ingratitude, men prevent all the goodness which the Lord has bestowed upon them from reaching maturity; for we abuse his blessings and corrupt them by our wickedness. The consequence is that hasty and short-lived fruits are produced, which cannot yield us continual nourishment" (Calvin). Luxury blinds, blindness leads to stumbling, and presently to a sudden fall.

III. FULFILMENTS OF MESSIANIC PROMISE. Here again the sky clears, and the star of hope glimmers. To the converted remnant Jehovah will be as a glittering Crown and a splendid Diadem. The royalty of the Divine King shall be more glorious than the famed beauty of Samaria, whose crown shall have been trampled in the dust, and his government a fairer chaplet to adorn the Divine seat. There will be a true *beauty* and *glory* in the Messianic times. Moreover, there will be a spirit of *justice* and *sound intelligence* diffused. The priests, the spiritual leaders, will be especially imbued with it (cf. Deut. xvii. 8—12; Exod. xxi. 22; 2 Chron. xix. 5—8). But the magistracy in general will be enlightened and instructed by the Spirit of God. Further, there will be *valour in the field*, so that the generals and their soldiers will be able to turn back war to the gate—probably of the city whence their foes came (2 Sam. xi. 23, "And we were upon them, even unto the entering of the gate"). There will, in short, in the ideal or Messianic government, be a government strong both *internally* and *externally*, wisdom and justice in home administration, strength and valour towards the foe without. These are needed for every empire and kingdom; and they come from God. "The Lord is our Defence." "Magistrates will not be able to rule and administer justice in a city, and military generals will not be able to repel enemies, unless the Lord shall direct them." To place our confidence in the world is to gather flowers, which forthwith fade and decay. We then seek to be happy without God, that is, without happiness itself. If we seek protection and good in God, then no calamities can prevent him from adorning the Church. When it shall appear that everything is on the eve of destruction, God will still be a Crown of glory to his people (Calvin).—J.

Vers. 7—13.—*The mockers and the prophet.* Here, it appears, the scene changes to Jerusalem. And we should compare the picture of drunkenness and luxury with that in Amos vi. 1—7 and Micah ii. 11.

I. THE PRIESTS AND PROPHETS OF THE TIME. They are seen reeling and staggering in the midst of, or as they come from, their most sacred functions. It is a strong and indignant description of *drunkenness in general* (cf. Prov. xx. 1). What more humiliating than the spectacle! To have "put an enemy in one's mouth to steal away one's brains," to be the thrall of one's own brutal appetites, and a "scoured dish of liquor"!

> "Ebrius urgeris multis miser undique curis
> Atque animi incerto fluitans errore vagaris."

How much worse the vice in those who need all the clearness of the brain, all the composure of the nerves, for the discharge of their high office! They should be "filled" with another "spirit" than this. The effect of the bodily intoxication must be to cloud the judgment, to confuse the perception of truth. And how truly the proverb must apply, "Like people, like priest"! If such the habits of the representatives of the people, what must the people themselves have been?

II. THE SPIRIT OF MOCKERY. (Vers. 9, 10.) "The drunkards mock Isaiah over their cups. Does he not know what respectable persons he is dealing with—not like children, who need leading-strings, but educated priests and prophets?" (Cheyne). They scoff at him by taking up words often on his mouth. Whom would he teach *knowledge*? This designates prophetic preaching (see ch. i. 3; xxxiii. 6). And *tidings*? Another word for revelation, for something "heard from Jehovah" (ver. 22; cf. ch. xxi. 10; liii. 1). Then they ridicule his *manner*. He is always "harping upon the same string," always dwelling upon the same commonplaces of morality and religion. "It is childish repetition," say they. But, in fact, the preacher must keep dwelling upon a few main points, so easily do they "slip by us"! (Heb. ii. 1). "Here a little, and there a little," it is a true description of popular preaching. It may seem "foolishness" to a scientifically trained understanding; but it has pleased God to save many by means of it. The gospel requires us to receive it as little children, and little by little, a saying here, and there a verse, and again a proverb; this is how little children learn.

III. REPLY OF THE PROPHET. He "retorts their own language upon them. Yes; it shall be, in fact, as you say. This childish monotone shall indeed sound in your ears. The description which you give of the revelations of Jehovah shall be exactly applicable to the harsh laconic commands of a merciless invader. For Assyrian, though closely allied to Hebrew, was sufficiently different from it both in grammar and in vocabulary to seem a 'stammering' or 'barbarous' tongue to Isaiah's contemporaries. The common diplomatic and commercial language of Syria and Assyria was Aramaic (see ch. xxxvi. 11)" (Cheyne). (For the word rendered "stammer," *i.e.* speak unintelligibly, as in a foreign tongue, cf. ch. xxxiii. 19; Prov. i. 26; xvii. 5; Ps. ii. 4; lix. 9; Job xxii. 19.) The lessons which the people refuse to heed when taught them in their native tongue, shall be pressed home upon them in the harsh accents of the barbarian. "Since the Divine patience has been lost upon them, a stronger way shall be taken to force their attention. God will thunder in their ears what to them will appear jargon, the language of a foreign nation!" How prophetic the words in general! The ill taste on our part which makes truth unpalatable in its simplicity and gentle persuasiveness will be sorely criticized when we are forced to listen to hoarse and rude accents. The prophet's burden had been of rest—rest to the weary; of refreshment by hearty faith in Jehovah (ch. xxx. 15; cf. Micah ii. 10; Jer. vi. 16). And now the old words, "line upon line," etc., will come back upon memory and conscience, to be enforced by retreat, and flight, and fall, and captivity. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." If truth sound barbarous, it is because we have not the true listening faculty. If it be not sweet to the taste as honey, it is because the stomach is disordered. If the Word profit not, it is because men do not "mix it with faith," *i.e.* with obedient and loving dispositions. A wilful ignorance and blindness alone deprives of spiritual benefits; a stubbornness in turning away from the offered light, and choosing to remain in darkness (cf. ch. viii. 16; vi. 9; xxix. 11; Mark iv. 12).—J.

Vers. 14—22.—*Jehovah pronounces judgment.* The rulers or politicians are addressed. They are stigmatized as "men of scorn" (cf. ver. 22; ch. xxix. 20; Hos. vii. 5). The scornful or scoffing habit implies *excessive self-confidence* on the one hand, on the other

contempt of religion and of God. But "be not deceived; God is not mocked." "It has been commonly found," says Calvin, "in almost every age, that the common people, though they are distinguished by unrestrained fierceness and violence, do not proceed to such a pitch of wretchedness as nobles and courtiers, or other crafty men, who think that they excel others in ability and wisdom." It is a dreadful and monstrous thing when the governors of the Church, not only are themselves blinded, but even blind others, and excite them to despise God and ridicule godly doctrine.

I. FALSE SECURITY. *It is some delusion as to their own security which leads men to mock at the judgments of God.* The ruling classes thought they had secured themselves against an Assyrian invasion. "They had their fortresses, their soothsayers and prophets, their diplomatists—the latter almost occupied with the preliminaries for a treaty with Egypt" (Cheyne). This fancied security is expressed under a bold figure. To be in covenant with death is like being in covenant with the beasts or the stones of the field (Job v. 23; Hos. ii. 18). They have made, as they think, a compact with Hades. Probably enough the allusion may be to the wizards whom they consult. If so, it is true enough to all experience that men, when they have cast off the restraints of true religion, seek to make up for it by dabbling in superstition. "The scorners or free-thinkers have retained a strong belief in the infernal powers, though little enough in those supernal" (Cheyne). Idly have they made lies their refuge, and so think to be exempt from the "flooding scourge" as it sweeps over the land (cf. ch. viii. 7, 8). They act as if there was any security except in "walking uprightly, and in speaking truth with the heart." Their resources are spoken of by them under plausible names, and there are ways that "seem right to them." They do not think they are falsehoods; but the prophet tears away the disguise, and calls them by their proper names. "The essential substance of the thoughts and words of the rulers is manifest to the Searcher of hearts" (Delitzsch).

II. THE TRUE FOUNDATION. A Foundation-stone is, or shall be, laid in Zion, nay, costly and solid (cf. 1 Kings v. 17, "Great stones, costly stones, hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house"). The foundation-stone of the temple typifies the unchangeable verity of God, as revealed from age to age in his holy seat and oracle. The believer shall rest securely upon God, and only here shall true security be found. (For the general idea, cf. Matt. vii. 24, 25. For the application to the Messiah, see 1 Pet. ii. 6; Rom. x. 11; Matt. xxi. 42; Luke xx. 17, 18; ii. 34; Eph. ii. 20.) The kingdom of God on earth rests on the Messiah. He was *tried* by temptation and other suffering, and so proved able and sufficient for the work of salvation. His Name, his work, is the most precious element in the Church's foundation. And amidst every tempest of judgment which shall sweep over the world, he who confides in Christ shall feel that he has built upon a Rock which cannot be shaken; and shall make no haste, shall be free from agitation and alarm. Till we possess faith, we must have continnal perplexity and distress; for there is but one Object on which we can safely rely—the truth of the Lord, which alone will give us peace and serenity of mind. Peace is the direct result of faith (Rom. v. 1), and faith is repose on that Foundation other than which none can be laid (1 Cor. iii. 11).

III. OVERTHROW OF FALSE REFUGES. There will be judgment exact and severe, figured by the carpenter's line and plummet. The hail-symbol of Divine wrath (Ps. cv. 32; Ezek. xiii. 13; xxxviii. 22; Rev. viii. 7; xi. 19) will sweep away the refuge of falsehood, and the hiding-place of deceit shall be carried along in the flood. That "covenant with death" shall be cancelled, and the "agreement with *Sheôl*" shall not stand. There shall be repeated Assyrian invasions; and the "tidings" at which men laughed shall be a terror for them to hear (cf. ver. 9). Or, having neglected the soul-message, they shall be compelled to listen to the preaching of facts. The proverb (ver. 20) depicts the state of distress which will exist. History will repeat itself. As when David conquered the Philistines on Perazim and Gibeon (2 Sam. v. 20; 1 Chron. xiv. 16), or as in the scene of Josh. x. 10, Jehovah will arise to do his work of judgment, a work more fitted for an alien people than that of his choice and love. God does not delight in judgment; it may even be called his "strange work," being foreign to the kindness of his heart. All that he drives at in his chastisements is to bring men to the knowledge of themselves. He is "slow to anger," and infinitely compassionate (Ps. ciii. 8; Exod. xxxiv. 6). Or the strangeness may be that he will now proceed to

attack and exterminate his people, as formerly he had their foes. The hand felt by their fathers for salvation shall be felt by them for destruction.

IV. CLOSING APPEAL. These scornful politicians who desire to break the Assyrian bonds are exhorted to change their minds, and so avoid the destruction otherwise certain and infallibly decreed by Jehovah of hosts. They wished to escape from their fetters by a breach of faith, with the help of Egypt, without Jehovah, and so mocked at the prophet's warning. He therefore appeals to them to stop their scoffing, lest they should fall out of their present bondage into one more severe, and lest the judgment certainly at hand should fall more weightily upon them. Timely repentance might even now open a way of escape. We may apply the appeal as general. As God gives us to foresee the issue of unwise ways in time, so by repentance may we avert the danger. To despise the Divine justice is not courage, but madness. Let us judge ourselves, that we may not be judged of the Lord; and because "that day" shall come as a thief in the night, ever let us have oil in our lamps, *i.e.* faith and repentance in our hearts, wisdom in the intelligence, justice and charity in our lives; and meditate daily on the vanity and shortness of our lives, the certainty and uncertainty of our deaths, the exactness and severity of the judgment to come, and the immutability of its results (South).—J.

Vers. 23—29.—*Proverbial lore.* The ploughman's activity and the thresher's are set before the people as a parable of Israel's tribulations. At least, this is one of the views of the passage.

I. THE PURPOSE OF AFFLICTION. It is from God, and the end ever kept in view is the good of the soul and its productiveness. The ploughman does not plough for ploughing's sake. He opens the soil, turns up the furrows, breaks the clods with the harrow, and all to prepare for the sowing of the seed. And so far the tiller is an image of God and of his operations on the spirit of man. There is seeming severity of *method*, but ever beneficence in the *end*. Again, there is variety of method in God's husbandry of the soul. As the farmer adapts his plans to the soil and to the kind of grain, selects the best modes of preparing the ground, of sowing the grain, of collecting the harvest, of separating the corn from the chaff. "He does not always plough, nor always sow, nor always thresh. He does not deal with all lands and all grains in the same way. Some he threshes in one mode, some in another, but he will be careful not to break the grain or destroy it in threshing it. However severe may appear to be his blows, his object is not to crush and destroy the grain, but to remove it from the chaff and save it. In all this he acts the part of wisdom, for God has taught him what to do. So with God."

II. THE WISDOM OF THE DIVINE HUSBANDMAN. The prophet seems struck with the power of the analogy he has drawn; and we "notice his large conception of revelation." It is a want of reason, as it seems to us, in what we suffer that gives rise to impatience. To detect wisdom in all we suffer is to know calm and peace in the soul's depths. Let us learn, then: 1. That there is *a reason* at the bottom of the mystery of all we suffer, though we may not be able to search it out and make it plain to ourselves. For our own good, or for the good of others in the scheme of providence, we must undergo and endure. Generally, perhaps, we may detect in the nature of the chastisement the nature of the sin. 2. We may expect *variety of trial*. This means variety of *experience*, of knowledge. And every such experience, manfully and dutifully outlived, brings fresh access of hope to the soul. "Tribulation" is an expressive word; it is the threshing and sifting process that must ever go on, to fit us for the garner of eternity. 3. It is not the design of God to *crush* us. He will not always chide, nor always bruise, will remit his strokes when they have had their due effect. 4. In patience, then, let us possess our souls. As the homely proverb says, "Patience is a plaster for all sores," and "All things come round to him that waits." We may be here more to be acted upon than to act; to submit to a probation, the fruit and result of which will be brought to light in some future sphere of service.—J.

Ver. 12.—*Rest and refreshment.* "To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear." Religion is designed to give us both rest and refreshment. We are described here—

I. AS WEARY, AND NEEDING REST. Weary! Can we not feel that? We *wear away*. The world is full of cares that fret and chafe us. We lose elasticity of step and cheeriness of heart. How many can say, "I am very weary"? The Bible understands man, and therefore its words are so true and its blessings so welcome. What do the weary need? Why, first of all, rest. We read of Jesus that, being weary, "he sat himself on the well:" so completely exhausted was he that all strength was gone. So not only in a physical sense do we need sweet sleep and rest; but in our human life and in our spiritual life we are weary. What we need is rest in a Person—rest in God himself; to rest in the Lord.

II. AS WEAK, AND NEEDING REFRESHMENT. We become exhausted in life's pilgrimage. Even in relation to spiritual supplies, our forces of faith and hope and courage fail. We need new supplies of grace and strength. This is well; for it would not be good for us to be able to live on yesterday's piety. Languor would come over our efforts after the Divine life if we had no need to seek daily bread. But refreshment comes. The faded flowers of our graces lift their drooping heads again. We have all seen and smelt the sweet fields after the rain-showers; we have all noticed these "seasons of refreshing." So in the highest things. These Hebrews would yet find God. He will be again dew unto Israel, and they will have times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

III. AS HEEDLESS AND UNWILLING TO HEAR. "Yet they would not hear." Some syren voice is still charming them and deadening their hearts to the heavenly ministry. Let us remember that we hear what we *will* to hear. That is still the responsible function of humanity, viz. to close or to open the ears to the messages of the great King. It is not that God does not speak; for he speaks in many dialects: all the languages of human event and circumstance are at his command. With us let it be, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth."—W. M. S.

Ver. 16.—*Christ the Corner-stone.* "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation." This stone we all know to be Christ, concerning whom all the prophets did testify. It is historically true that the Stone was laid in Zion, and what we have to treat of is the house. Here is the Foundation. Firm, as the eternal Rock, with its roots in God's own everlasting nature. The Foundation is not *created;* it is *laid.* God sends forth his Son to be the Saviour of men. This foundation is laid deep in toil and tears, in humility and indignity. It is laid in the agony and bloody sweat, the cross and Passion. Yet there it is. None can move it. Nor can any soul of man find other foundation. This Foundation is designated in three ways.

I. IT IS A TRIED STONE. We are reminded of tried things. The Word of the Lord is a tried Word. Already prophets speak of the Christ as the tried Stone. The vision they have of him is not of a great Teacher simply, but of a Divine Redeemer, upon whose mighty work all generations of men may rest for redemption and life. The centuries have rolled away, and *now* history endorses prophecy. Generations of departed saints have testified that Christ is a Friend that loveth at all times—a Rock that no waters of sorrow, not even the waterfloods of death, can move.

II. IT IS A PRECIOUS CORNER-STONE. Yes; here the weight of the building has to come, the Corner-stone. Precious; for there is this description everywhere given of the Christ: "Beside me there is no Saviour." He is *the* Pearl of great price. He is the Church's *one* Foundation. Precious in himself, as holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Precious, because of the living temple of redeemed souls which he supports. Precious in the Father's eyes, in the eyes of angels, and of all the great multitude of the redeemed.

III. A SURE FOUNDATION. That is what we all want in religion—certainty. We cannot do with a mere philosophic "quest." We want "rest." We do not want an ornate religion; we want rather to be able to say, "I know in whom I have believed." When the mind is palsied with doubt, when the heart is quaking with fear, then we experience the deepest misery possible to man; for the sky above us is soon lost to view if the rock beneath us is not firm and true. Heaven goes when faith goes. God himself declares, "Behold, I lay in Zion . . . a *sure* Foundation."—W. M. S.

Ver. 28.—*The use of tribulation.* "Bread-corn is bruised." Tribulation must

thresh our lives. And when the chaff is separated from the wheat, then the corn must be bruised and broken. It is not the outwardly peaceful, comfortable life that has in it the elements of ministry. The Saviour was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He is brought near to us as being not of the seed of angels, but of the seed of Abraham. How were those sensibilities of his nature bruised with the hardness, coldness, and neglect of men! How even his disciples hurt him, forsaking him, and not even watching with him one hour! "Bread-corn is bruised." "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

I. THE BEST LIFE MEANS PAIN. Bruised! Corn is not enough. It must be made into bread. It is thus that true affection comes out when we suffer for others. So also is it with true humility. It is the bruised heart that has medicaments in it for others out of its own castings down.

II. THE BEST LIFE MEANS USEFULNESS. We stand in constant relationship to others. Man may be to his brother bread of thought, through long hours of mental struggle and agony. He may be bread of compassion too. We are to be "meet for the Master's use." Thus we learn that to be mere quietists or pietists is not enough. We must not light the lonely lamp of incense before the altar, and remain in rapt meditation or even devotion, always. No. The disciples had to come down from the ecstatic moments of the transfiguration to the common earth and to homespun duty.

III. THE BEST LIFE MEANS OPPOSITION TO THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD. "Save us from being *bruised*," is the cry of men of this world. "Give us comfort, ease, health, outward prosperity." And so these are protected at every point. Sorrow is never welcomed as an angel. Discipline is never thought of as a moulder of character.

IV. THE BEST LIFE MEANS GOD'S OWN CHASTISEMENT. This is divinely appointed and delicately ordered. It means wisdom and forethought and adaptation; ver. 27, "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing-instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod." Yes, that is it, there is a hand at work—a Father's hand.

V. THE BEST LIFE MEANS HEAVEN. "Because he will not *ever* be threshing it." No. Discipline, however painful, ends in the grave. The beauty of spiritual perfection begins when we are with the saints in light. "These are they which *came out* of great tribulation. They hunger no more. They thirst no more. There shall be no night there."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—4, 7, 8.—*The evil of excess: a sermon on intemperance.* The allusion here is to the prevalent baneful vice of intemperance. The evils which are connected with it, and which constitute its condemnation, are such as belong to other kinds of excess, but especially and emphatically to *it*.

I. HONOUR IS HUMILIATED BY IT. "The crown of pride is trodden under feet" (vers. 1, 3). The proud city, which was, alas! a city given up to drunkenness, should be brought down to the very dust. Intemperance causes the man who has held the highest position to become despised by every neighbour that has the common virtue of sobriety; it takes the crown of honour from the brow; it humbles even to the ground the pitiable victims of vice.

II. BEAUTY IS SPOILED BY IT. Its "glorious beauty becomes a faded flower" (vers. 1, 4). Excess is found, not only in the vulgar, in the illiterate, in the uncomely, but also in the refined, in the accomplished, in the beautiful, of the sons and daughters of men. When it *is* found there it soon does its fatal work. The beautiful is soon gone both from the form and from the spirit; the green leaf withers, the exquisite bloom fades. From that which once attracted every eye, all men turn away grieved, if not positively repelled.

III. STRENGTH IS SAPPED BY IT. "Overcome with wine" (ver. 1). The man whose strength is composed of so many elements—material, mental, spiritual—is positively beaten, overcome, made helpless, useless, ludicrous, despicable, by a few glasses of liquor! It is a painful, shameful instance of strength being mastered by that which it ought to be able to subdue.

IV. WISDOM IS MISLED BY IT. "They have erred through wine . . . are out of the way . . . they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (ver. 7). They who, if

their faculties were unclouded, would perceive truth, and have spiritual insight, and gain the guidance which Heaven grants to them that seek it, are so weakened in mental power, or so bereft of spiritual strength, that they grope in darkness when they might walk in the light of the Lord.

V. INFLUENCE IS FORFEITED BY IT. "The priest and the prophet have erred." Even those who, but for guilty excess, might have led the people in every good way, are caught in the toils, are numbered among the victims, and their power is gone, their influence is forfeited. A drunken prophet is one whom all unite to spurn, and his word is worth less than nothing to the cause he pleads.

VI. IT LEADS ON AND DOWN TO THAT WHICH IS LOATHSOME. (Ver. 8.)

VII. IT CONSUMES ITS CONSUMER. (Vers. 4, 7.) Man may say that they swallow their wine, but it is truer to say of many that their wine "swallows" them; for it devours their substance, their character, their reputation, their prospects. Everything is "eaten up" like the "hasty fruit before the summer," speedily and utterly.

VIII. GOD IS DECIDEDLY AND EMPHATICALLY AGAINST IT. (Ver. 2.) He has pronounced against it in strong terms, and he brings down a heavy hand upon it; the enemy which he calls against those guilty of excess is "a mighty and strong one:" poverty, shame, remorse, loneliness, early death, and final exclusion from his presence (1 Cor. vi. 10).—C.

Vers. 5, 6.—*God our Glory, Beauty, etc.* "In that day," *i.e.* in the day when God shall reign over his people, either the day of their return to him in loyal obedience, or the day of their return to their own land under his delivering power—in that day God would be everything to his chosen people; he would be the Object and the Source of their glory, their beauty, their righteousness, their strength. We may see how God in Christ is the same to us.

I. OUR GLORY. "The Lord of hosts shall be for a Crown of glory." We glory in our God as the Lord of all power and might, as the One whose right hand is full of righteousness, as the faithful Creator, etc.; but we glory most in him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in him who so pitied a rebellious race "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth," etc. In Christ Jesus the glories and grandeurs of the Divine character are most brilliantly illustrated.

II. OUR BEAUTY. "For a Diadem of beauty." In the gospel God has (1) revealed the beauties of his own character to us; for in the life, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, we behold transcendent moral loveliness, all imaginable graces perfectly blended and intermingled. And in it he has (2) called forth the utmost possible beauty in human character. There are produced in Christian lands and by Christian processes not one or two exquisite human characters here and there, but multitudes of them beneath every sky and in every age; such that it is not enough to say that they are good or that they are useful; it must be added that they are exceedingly beautiful—they are *diadems*, attracting the eye, delighting the soul.

III. OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. "For a Spirit of judgment." The man who has "learned Christ" is a man of integrity; to him injustice, unrighteousness, dishonesty, the withholding of that which is due, of whatever kind, is not only distasteful, but impossible: "the *spirit* of judgment," the spirit of equity and truth is in him, gained from Christ, implanted by the Divine Spirit. If this spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, be not in him, he is none of Christ's (Rom. viii. 12).

IV. OUR STRENGTH. "And for Strength to them that turn the battle to the gate." They who truly know God in Christ are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." God communicates to them something of the "exceeding greatness of his power." In Divine strength they are strong (1) to discharge duty; (2) to bear burdens; (3) to work in the field of holy service; (4) to resist spiritual adversaries, to "turn the battle to the gate."—C.

Vers. 9—13.—*Indocility.* When God speaks man may well listen, whatsoever strains the Divine Teacher may employ. But man is often found to be, not only an inapt, but even an unwilling, scholar. Such were they who are here terribly rebuked.

I. THE DESIGN OF GOD'S TEACHING. God had been saying, "This is the rest," etc. (ver. 12). The end of all God's instruction is to give rest to his human scholars. *Peace*

was the promise of the old covenant (Numb. vi. 26; xxv. 12). *Rest* was the offer of the great Teacher (Matt. xi. 28, 29). Rest of heart in the favour and love of God was the high and elevated hope held out for all who would learn and be obedient; and this is still the desire and the design of God in all his teaching and in all his correction.

II. MAN'S OBJECTION TO GOD'S METHOD. "To whom," they complain, "shall he teach knowledge . . . to them that are weaned . . . must it be precept upon precept?" etc. (vers. 9, 10). Are we such little children that we are to be treated thus by Jehovah? Men have always been found who object to God's ways of guiding them. It is too plain and palpable, or it is too mysterious; it demands no effort of the intellect, or it taxes the thought too severely; it is too commonplace, or it is too startling, or it is too hard; were he to adopt some other method, to come to them in some other way, they would listen and obey; but as he speaks they will not hear. Especially are men slow to learn the simple and repeated lessons by which God teaches them in his providence—the lessons which come with every morning light and with every evening shade, with the continued loving-kindnesses of the passing hour, with the changes of the seasons, with the passage of neighbours and friends to another world; these reiterated teachings are disregarded, and the one great lesson of reverence and of devotedness is unlearned.

III. GOD'S INDIGNATION AT HUMAN CONTUMACY. The strain of the prophet is one outpouring of intense indignation and keen rebuke; the anger of Jehovah is kindled against them. We may understand that persistent indocility is a very serious sin in the estimate of God. Not to hearken when he speaks to us, whether he speaks in providence, in his Word, or in Christian ordinances, is to place ourselves beneath his very high displeasure.

IV. DIVINE RETRIBUTION. The penalty of their perverse indocility shall be that they will have to learn by far less agreeable methods than the one which they despised; the repeated elementary instruction of the Hebrew prophet should give place to the barbarous sounds of a foreign tongue. Guilty folly often finds that punishment awaits it which corresponds only too painfully with the sin. The Jews demand a king because they prefer the visible to the invisible, the physical to the spiritual; and they gain one who is chosen on this cherished principle of theirs, and his bodily stature and visible form prove to be a sorry substitute for the wisdom of the invisible Sovereign: the penalty is paid in the same coin as the transgression. David's unholy interference with domestic right is punished by saddest and most serious disappointments in his own family. Retribution, not general only, but that which is particularly appropriate to our sin, awaits us a little further on. Disobedience—and emphatically indocility—leads to misery and shame. Hearken intelligently, however and whenever God may speak, and hasten cheerfully to obey.—C.

Vers. 14, 15, 18—20.—*The infatuation of sin.* In strong, pictorial language the prophet points out—

I. THAT SINFUL MEN ACT AS IF THEY COULD AVERT IMPENDING DOOM. They act as if they said, "We have made a covenant with death," etc. Every day the guilty and the foolish are living as if they were possessed with a power to wrestle with and overcome approaching doom. The drunkard seems to say, "I will drink, and not be ruined in health;" and the gambler to say, "I will stake money, and not be disappointed;" and the rogue to say, "I will defraud, and not be detected;" and the me who "mind earthly things" to say, "We will invest all our hopes and find all o heritage in this world, and not be robbed of our portion," etc. Such men seem to bu themselves up with that which, to all that look on, is a transparent infatuation.

II. THAT SINFUL MEN CONVINCE THEMSELVES OF THAT WHICH THEY MIGHT KNOW TO BE WHOLLY FALSE. They "make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under falsehoods." 1. They choose the wrong course, and tell themselves they are acting under compulsion, and are guiltless. 2. They soften their sin by covering it with some pleasant euphemism. 3. They place between themselves and the condemnation of God the shield of human example, the frequency and popularity of their vice; they screen themselves behind their brethren, as if God did not see them, and did not hold them guilty. 4. They allow evil practice to beget such obliquity of moral vision that they

call good "evil," and evil "good;" they even "glory in their shame," so have they lied unto themselves.

III. THAT SINFUL MEN ACT AS IF THEY COULD RELY ON SUCCOUR WHICH IS WORTHLESS. They stretch themselves on a bed which is too short for their stature; they wrap themselves with clothing which will not cover them (ver. 20). In their weariness they resort to pleasures which do not give them rest, and from which they rise as tired as before. In their sorrow, or in their shame, or in their defeat, they have recourse to comforts which give no heart-ease, and leave them sad and troubled in soul. Many weary years, whole periods of life, even an entire earthly course, will men spend, trying and pitifully failing to console themselves with false comforts, to find rest in excitements, in vanities, and sometimes in vices, which have no power to soothe and satisfy the soul which only truth and love can fill.

IV. THAT GOD WILL ONE DAY AROUSE THEM FROM THEIR GUILTY ERROR. (Vers. 18, 19.) The overflowing scourge *will* come, and will *not* pass by them; they will be trodden down beneath it. The overwhelming storm will hold them in its embrace of death. The day of disillusion, of self-reproach, of shame, of Divine retribution, will arrive: "Be not deceived [do not deceive yourselves]; *God* is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—C.

Vers. 16—22.—*The judgments of God.* When human folly has gone to so great a length (ver. 15), it may look out for the coming of Divine judgment; for this cannot be long delayed. And when we look we find—

I. THE SEVERITY OF GOD'S VISITATION. 1. It will *correspond closely with man's guilt*, as if measured with line and plummet (ver. 17); it will be broad as its breadth, deep as its depth, enlarged to its magnitude; more severe as man's guilt is more wanton, most severe as it is most aggravated and inexcusable. 2. It will be *literally destructive*, sweeping away the false refuge (ver. 18), tearing up the unholy compact (ver. 19), causing consternation as it proceeds on its desolating path (ver. 19), compelling those who try to make shift with earthly succour to know the utter insufficiency of their measures (ver. 20), constituting a very "consumption" of all that had been possessed and rejoiced in (ver. 22). When "the day of the Lord" comes it is often found to be a very terrible time indeed, stripping the rich and strong of his wealth and power, humbling the society or the nation to the very dust, causing lamentation, shame, death.

II. THE APPARENT SUDDENNESS OF IT. (Ver. 21.) As, in the person of David, the Lord "broke forth like a breach of waters" upon the enemy (2 Sam. v. 20), so suddenly will he appear in judgment against those who break his laws and reject his Son. The waters have been long collecting, the banks have been long loosening, but in a few minutes, at the last, the dam is broken, and the rushing streams are down the valley-side, carrying destruction in their path. So is it with the accumulating wrath of God: this is "treasured" up by sin after sin, year after year (Rom. ii. 5); but at some point in the career it "breaks forth" like David's army, like the descending waters, and behold everything is gone—treasure, reputation, health, prospects, life itself.

III. GOD'S INDISPOSITION TO SMITE. It is a *strange* work, a *strange* act, to God (ver. 21). To confer and to sustain life, to impart blessing, to multiply riches, to enlarge the mind, to strengthen and sanctify the soul, to fill with hope and joy,—this is the work which is natural, congenial, pleasant to him whose Name is love. But to visit with penalty, to smite rather than to spare, to inflict sorrow and humiliation,—this is strange, ungenial, joyless to the heavenly Father. "As I live," saith God, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." He *delighteth* in mercy, but he is constrained to punish.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF MERCY THAT RUNS THROUGH THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. (Ver. 16.) In the midst of a passage where we should expect to find nothing but holy indignation, we meet with the intention to bless. Notwithstanding all that provokes to wrath and deserves destruction, there is to be laid the precious Corner-stone which nothing can remove, and which will uphold the most majestic fabric of prosperity and joy. God visits with correction—severe, continuous, complete; yet he has a redemptive purpose on his mind, and out of all the strife and discord a glorious temple of truth and piety will arise.

We learn that *the faithful have no need to fear.* "He that believeth shall not make haste." (1) No need to be alarmed for his own safety; for God, who is his Refuge, will hide him in the pavilion of his power. (2) No need to take hurried or questionable, certainly not forbidden or unworthy, steps for the deliverance of others; for God's promised word is the assurance of ultimate redemption.—C.

Vers. 23—29.—*Divine discrimination.* There are two preliminary lessons we may gather from these verses before we pluck the principal one.

I. THAT IN THE ACTS AND INDUSTRIES OF MAN WE MAY FIND APT ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE WISDOM OF GOD. "Give ear and hear" (ver. 23). There is something well worth observing in human husbandry; it will teach the student a useful lesson respecting the ways of God. Not only from the lilies of the field and from the birds of the air, but also from the arts and industries of man, come suggestions which will explain Divine providence and give rest to the troubled mind.

II. THAT AGRICULTURE AFFORDS ONE PROOF OF THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF A DIVINE INTELLIGENCE. How is it that, while the birds and the beasts continue through all succeeding ages to supply their wants by the same unchanging processes, man is ever moving forward? From hunting to grazing, from grazing to agriculture, he ascends; and in agriculture he shows a discretion and a versatility which are striking to all who have eyes to see and souls to learn. The fact is that man is taught of God. "His God doth instruct him," etc. (ver. 26); it comes from him who is "wonderful in counsel" (ver. 29). The intelligence, the shrewdness, the inventiveness, the patience, the foresight, which are manifested in husbandry, go far to assure us that God is near us, laying his hand upon us, touching the springs of our mind, calling forth from us intellectual and moral faculties which, though immeasurably inferior, are yet akin to his own.

III. THAT GOD IS SHOWING A CAREFUL DISCRIMINATION IN THE TREATMENT OF HIS ERRING CHILDREN. This is *the* lesson of the prophet's illustration: the husbandman only ploughs till he is ready to sow; he always threshes with the instrument which is suitable, adjusting his means to the character of the corn; he orders everything with careful, discriminating consideration of what is best at the particular time with the particular object. So carefully, so wisely, so tenderly, does God deal with us. 1. He mingles mercies with judgments, light with shade, hope with fear: "He does not always chide." He sows as well as ploughs. 2. He places us in spheres that suit us; some in the more prominent, others in the more humble, parts of the field (ver. 25). 3. He applies his chastisement according to our nature and our character (vers. 27, 28): to some—to the more hardened and abandoned—he administers his severer blows; to others—to his people who, though his people, have much yet to learn—he sends the milder and gentler measures of rebuke; on them he lays his hand more tenderly.

Learn: 1. That God, in chastisement, is seeking fruit—the harvest of love, of trust, of obedience, of service. 2. That if he deals severely with us, it is because severity is needed for the high purpose he has before him. 3. That he will never deal too rigorously with any one of his children.—C.

Ver. 1.—*The woe of the drunkard.* On this subject there is grave danger of saying extravagant, unqualified, and unreasonable things. The abstract rightness or wrongness of using strong drinks must be decided by the individual judgment. Enough now to say that no man with the spirit of a patriot, much less with the spirit of a Christian—who is his brother's keeper,—can observe the growth of drinking habits in modern society without serious alarm; no mothers without grave anxiety for their sons; no wives without deep concern for their husbands and themselves. The common speech about drink too often leaves the impression that the evil of it lies in the drink itself, and so tends to take our minds from the much more serious fact that the evil of drink lies in us, and in its relation to us—in feebleness of will, and lack of self-restraint and self-control.

I. WHEREIN LIES THE PERIL OF STRONG DRINK? Precisely in its strength, in its raging. "Strong drink is raging." There is produced by it an elevation and excitement that are beyond nature; according to the differences of men's dispositions, it is either an

elevation, or a raging of folly or of violence. Our peril lies in yielding to the unnatural or the unnecessary. 1. The *unnatural.* Every man is in duty bound to develop all his faculties up to the limit of their capacity. But every man is in duty bound also not to develop some to the neglect of others; and not to excite any to a degree beyond his full and perfect self-control. So far as he does he ceases to be a true man; a foreign power has taken the place of his central will, and he is, in fact, a man possessed and ruled by an evil force, by a devil. This may be illustrated by showing (1) the unnatural effect produced by strong drink on the physical frame; (2) the effect on the moral nature, especially in exciting sensual passions; (3) the influence on the children and descendants of the self-indulgent. This is so important a point, and brings to view such obscure, but painful facts, that a few may be set down from which selections may be made. Gall relates the case of a Russian family, where the father and grandfather had both died prematurely from the effects of intoxication, and the grandson manifested from the age of five years the most decided taste for strong liquors. M. Morel says, "I have never seen the patient cured of his propensity whose tendencies to drinking were derived from the hereditary predisposition given to him by his parents." He gives also the history of four generations of a family. First generation: the father an habitual drunkard, killed in a public-house brawl. Second generation: son inherited the father's habits, which gave rise to attacks of mania, terminating in paralysis and death. Third generation: grandson strictly sober, but full of hypochondriacal and imaginary fears of persecution, and had homicidal tendencies. Fourth generation: great-grandson, very limited intelligence, an attack of madness when sixteen years old, terminating in stupidity nearly amounting to idiocy. With him the race became extinct. We can conceive no revelation of the *unnaturalness* of the condition and relations produced by strong drink more impressive than this. 2. It is *unnecessary;* for it satisfies no demand of the true manhood; only the demands of a depraved, disordered, and diseased taste. The best that can be said of it is that it may be a medicine. It is now well established that it is not a necessary food.

II. WHO AMONG US LIE EXPOSED TO THE TEMPTATIONS OF STRONG DRINK? This may be answered with great plainness, simplicity, and practical force. 1. Those who are born into a heritage of drinking tendencies. 2. Those who have some ability in song or entertaining, and so are enticed into company and treated for the sake of the pleasure they give (compare the case of the poet Burns). 3. Those who have idle time which can be spent in inns and hotels. 4. Those who have great business energy and enterprise without the restraining influence of high moral principle. 5. Those who, having little pleasure in intelligent occupations, seek excitement in the indulgence of bodily passion. 6. Those who have unhappy or uncomfortable homes. 7. Those whose daily work takes them to houses where they are treated to drink. All are in special peril at holiday or convivial seasons, and in times of convalescence from disease, or of family trouble. No one of us can venture to say, amidst the enticements of modern social life, "I shall never fall. I shall never be a drunkard." He neither knows himself, nor the subtlety of the evil, who speaks so confidently. Our power to stand lies in our laying hold of One who is stronger than ourselves, and keeping up the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Every day and everywhere, with our eyes on God, we should be saying, "Hold thou us up, and we shall be safe."—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Beauty, wisdom, and strength for us in God.* Kings wear crowns; kings decide causes and give judgment; kings lead armies to battle; so kings must be chiefly in the thought of the prophet here. But kings are, or ought to be, the representatives of the nations they rule; the realized ideals of the nation, the persons in whom they can see their best selves. Hezekiah was in some good sense such a king. What God was to him, God would be to all his people; Isaiah even says, God was to the residue of his people, to the pious ones of Judah, when Samaria was taken, and the kingdom of Israel destroyed. The prophet first speaks admiringly of them, and then finds occasion for the qualifying of his praise (vers. 7, 8). We may consider what God can be to his people, when they open heart and life to his incomings and inworkings.

I. CHARACTER FOR THE FELLOWSHIPS OF LIFE COMES OF GOD. Upon character the pleasantness and graciousness of life unions and associations almost entirely depend. Those who have the true helpful and sanctifying power among us are those who have

the "beauty of the Lord their God upon them." There are spheres of life in which talent tells; but in homes and society it is character that tells. After illustrating and enforcing this, the importance of correcting the error of sentiment, which regards character as a purely human growth and attainment, should be shown. So easily do we say, "Character, we can win that ourselves." So needful is it to show that "character is of God." It comes out of the circumstances which God provides, and out of the relations in which God sets us, and through sorrows, bearings, and strugglings, which God sanctifies. St. Paul says, "I am what I am." "His grace on me was not in vain."

II. WISDOM FOR THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE COMES OF GOD. We have natural skill for some forms of business or of profession; but who endowed us with the natural ability? We gain practical skill amidst the experiences of life; but who renews the mental powers and bodily health, and presides over impressions made? A thousand complex conditions come in every life: who guides to right decisions, directing the judgment in ways of truth? "This wisdom cometh from above."

III. STRENGTH FOR THE DEMANDS OF LIFE COMES OF GOD. The psalmist lifts a thankful heart to God who "renews our youth like the eagle's." He "giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." No experience of life is more assured, none brings a deeper rest to our hearts than this—"when we are weak, then we may be strong" in God.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*The moral deterioration of self-indulgent habits.* "They err in vision, they stumble in judgment." Isaiah treats wine and strong drink in much the same way as we do now. To him it was the prominent instance, and so it could be made the type, of self-indulgence, which has many forms and many expressions. Certain very manifest degradations follow on indulgence in strong drink, or in opium, or in morphia, and in these cases oppressive illustrations are given of the evils that attend lesser or less apparent indulgences. An ever-working law applies to *all* cases, small as well as great; but we may more easily trace the working in the great. This may be shown by some careful accounts of the deterioration of mind and character following on drink-indulgence in men, and even more painfully in women. Terrible stories of the ruin of character wrought by opium-smoking in China can be given. And recently, very painful revelations have been made of the existence of a degrading morphio-mania, especially among the upper classes. Persons who have had morphia injected under the skin, to relieve pain, find a craving for it created; they indulge the passion, and the result is utter mental and moral helplessness, and a certain, dreadful death. In measure, the law of deterioration applies to indulgence in eating, in drinking tea, in matters of sensual passion, in craving for newspapers, in seeking pleasure, and even in matters of play or of hobby. As soon as the indulgence in anything gets established it begins to degrade. A man loses his manhood as soon as any *thing* is allowed to gain control over him; and with lost manhood comes dimmed vision and stumbling judgment. The moral consequences of self-indulgence may be fully treated under four divisions.

I. PHYSICAL EFFECTS ON BODIES. This must be considered, because we are every day coming better to understand the close connection between bodily conditions and moral states. The moral habit becomes tightly fixed by an actual bodily bias, an actual tendency of nerve and muscle to do again what has been done once.

II. MORAL EFFECT ON WILLS. There is an actual weakening of will-force. The power to say "No" fades and dies out, and the will is borne away wheresoever mere appetite leads.

III. PRACTICAL EFFECT ON CONDUCT. Wherever moral control is limited conduct becomes dangerous or disgraceful.

IV. FINAL EFFECT ON FATE. Whatever the view taken of the future state, they are at terrible disadvantage in it—even if it be a continuous reforming condition—who start on it degraded by self-indulgence.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*Need for the reiteration of truth.* "Line upon line." It is not difficult to set forth the practical applications of this passage; but we cannot be quite sure that we know the exact original bearing of the words. Three suggestions have been made. 1. Ver. 9 may refer to God's favour to the Jews; then ver. 10 describes the abundant revelation made to them, with rules and duties related to all the conditions and emer-

gencies of life. 2. Ver. 9 may refer to the incapacity of the leaders and religious teachers of the Jews; then ver. 10 describes their puerile methods of instruction. 3. Ver. 9 may refer to the incapacity of the people for high attainment in spiritual knowledge; then ver. 10 describes the elementary methods of instruction which are found necessary for them. This may be regarded as the most probable explanation. The prophet is describing the effect of drunkenness, which was moral and intellectual weakening. Sin is represented as an enfeebling drunkenness. It is quite in Isaiah's method to complain of the incapacity of the people for the reception of truth: ch. liii. 1, "Who hath believed our report," etc.? ch. vi. 9, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not;" ch. xliii. 8, "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears;" ch. xliii. 17, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?" Out of *this* relation of the text comes the thought for present consideration. It is this—*Religious truths, claims, and duties need to be constantly reiterated.* The work of the Christian teacher can be put into two words—"simplify" and "repeat." Both observation and experience prove the necessity for such constant repetition. We inquire—

I. THE REASONS FOR THIS ARRANGEMENT. As a fact, it has been found an essential of effective teaching in every age. One generation only passes in a very limited degree into possession of the thought and knowledge of the previous generation. No one individual can make advances from the platform of attainment reached by another. Each one must reach the knowledge of truth, and the sense of duty, for himself. This makes the Bible and Christian teaching such ever-new things. Solomon tells us that there is no new thing under the sun; but he might with equal truth have said that there is no *old* thing. We can see that there must be reiteration: 1. Because moral completeness is never reached on this side the grave, and so there is always a sphere for the teacher, and a demand for the old truths. We are constantly asking for the renewal of the same good influences, and as we grow in experience we even care more for the simpler first principles. 2. Because the power of spiritual motives is always liable to weaken and fade. Christian teaching proposes no mere fashioning of life; it would nourish, revive, requicken the very springs of motive and feeling, ever seeking to make and to keep the heart and the will right. The physician not only removes suffering, he purifies the blood, and seeks to quicken the vitality. Just as the fountains and the streams, so our spiritual natures, tend to lose their volume, and even run dry; there must be the constant reiteration of the showers for their replenishing. 3. Because truth and duty-claims can only enter in as they find souls prepared for them; and therefore truth and duty must be always standing before men's doors, waiting their opportunity. The human heart is closed to religion, and, when opened, its tendency is ever to close again. It is like a spring-door, and sin and self-love have put the spring on. When providences and sanctified influences open the door, the old, old truth, and the old, old gospel, must be waiting, ready to enter in.

II. SOME THINGS CONNECTED WITH US IN WHICH THIS REITERATION IS EVIDENTLY NECESSARY. What a joy it would be to Christian pastors and teachers if none of their people needed!—1. To be urged to accept the offers of Divine mercy. But many a door is shut yet; so the message must be spoken again and again. 2. To be reminded of the duty of attending public worship, and the means of grace. 3. To be persuaded concerning the cultivation of Christian unity; the expression of a Christly forgiveness, forbearance, and charity in relations one with another. 4. To have enforced upon them the duty of watchfulness against the encroachments of the worldly spirit, and the loss of Christian zeal, fervour, and first love. What a joy it would be to Christian teachers if they could safely "leave these first principles, and go on unto perfection"! if they might lay down the minister's commission, as it is now understood, because they could say, "Lord, thy people no longer need precept upon precept, and line upon line"! Plead, in conclusion, thus: "You often say of the ministry, 'It is the same old story; there is nothing new.' But the question is—Have you accepted the message? Have you obeyed the command? It can never be old until you have, and then it will be so loved and so precious that you will never think it old; it will be ever fresh and ever new."—R.T.

Ver. 10.—*Mockers of religion.* A different explanation to that given in the previous homily is finding favour in modern times. The passage is supposed to represent the

drunkards mocking Isaiah over their cups. "Does he not know what respectable persons he is dealing with, not like children who need leading-strings, but educated priests and prophets? They have caught up from Isaiah one of his favourite words (probably), and repeat it with a sneer. He is always interfering with moral and political recommendations; always finding some 'little' point to censure and correct" (Cheyne). "Vers. 9, 10 contain the taunting language of the drunken priests and judges of the Jews, who repel with scorn the idea that they should require the plain and reiterated lessons which Jehovah taught by his messengers. Such elementary instruction was fit only for babes; it was an insult to their understanding to suppose that they stood in need of it" (Henderson). Dr. S. Cox puts this view of the passage in a very striking and forcible way: "In their private intercourse with each other, when, as Isaiah tells us, they 'were swallowed up of wine' . . . in their shameless carousals, the false priests, and the prophets who backed them with 'lying visions,' made themselves great sport in jeering at Isaiah, in ridiculing the one prophet who cared more for the welfare of the people than for their applause, and loved the service of God more than the pleasure of the senses. They mocked at his incorrigible simplicity. They mimicked and burlesqued his manner of speech. 'Whom would *he* teach knowledge?' they cried; 'and to whom would he make a message intelligible? To weanlings from the milk, just withdrawn from the breast?' To them he seemed an intolerable moralist, for ever schooling them as if they were babes, and needed the mere milk of instruction, and not strong men capable of digesting meat. 'With him,' they said, 'it is always precept on precept, line on line, line on line, here a little, and there a little.' Or, as we may, perhaps, better translate their words, they said, 'With him it is always "bid and bid, forbid and forbid, a little bit here, and a little bit there."' What really angered these burly scorners was that the prophet treated them as though they were children only just weaned, and not masters in Israel. They were weary of hearing him repeat the first rudiments of morality, and apply them to the sins and needs of the time." We may fix attention on this point—Mocking at religion and religious teachers represents the last stage of apostasy. There is little hope for the mockers; they must go into the fires of judgment. But what stages do men pass through before they reach this point of decline? In answering this question we may keep our eye on the illustrations afforded by the apostasy of Jewish priests and rulers, and at the same time make due applications to the perils of apostasy, as we may ourselves be exposed to them.

I. The religious man steps upon the sliding, downward road, when he begins to NEGLECT PERSONAL SOUL-CULTURE. As the Apostle John tells us, a man prospers only as his soul prospers. The essential thing in the good man is not well-ordered conduct, but the regenerate life. The new life needs its care and its food continually. This neglect of soul-culture is the "grieving of the Holy Ghost," of which St. Paul warns us so earnestly. It is the "leaving of the first love" of which the risen and living Christ complains. A man goes wrong first in matters of private devotion and Christian habit.

II. The next step is the ENTHRONING OF SELF-WILL IN THE PLACE OF GOD'S WILL. Lose the sacred humility and fear that comes with close relations to God, and *self* will be sure to grow big, and the rule of life comes to be the "devices and desires of our own hearts." Then mistakes, stumblings, and wanderings are easy; and "broad" ways are preferred to narrow.

III. As soon as this condition is established, there arises the wish to SEE AND KNOW NOTHING THAT CAN POSSIBLY CONVICT AND HUMBLE; and the man lets the dust cover his Bible, the grass grow over his kneeling-place, and excuses keep him from the house of God. Like these priests and leaders, they are at heart afraid of what God's Isaiahs might say to them. May we not fear that this is the secret reason for modern neglect of God's worship? Men do not wish to be warned. They fear lest they should be warned. They do not want to hear the truth about the degrading slavery in which idol self always holds its victims.

IV. Then comes the beginning of the almost hopeless stages. A BLINDING AND HARDENING PROCESS GOES ON; and presently those who would not see *cannot see*. Then a man can hear all the terrors, and heed none of them; can listen to all the persuasions of the everlasting love, and be moved by none of them.

V. And at last he CAN EVEN MOCK AT GOODNESS AND GOOD MEN; and in his foolish

and wicked pride can scoff even at God's Word and God's prophet. Down low indeed that man must have fallen who once knew the "glory of the Lord," and waited for the Lord's will, and now, in his rioting, can jeer at sacred things. Impress that those who neglect the culture of piety put from them all gracious influences, and become so possessed with the evil spirit of self that, like the demoniac in the Gospels, they say, even to the healing, saving Christ, "What have we to do with thee?"—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The sure Foundation.* "A precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation" (Revised Version). It is characteristic of prophetic messages that, however severely sins may be denounced, and judgment declared, in the very midst of the message some word of love and hope and cheer is put in for the sake of the true and faithful ones. God is ever mindful of his elect remnant. Those who are striving to be obedient and righteous in a degenerate age, and in the midst of abounding self-indulgence, are within his observation, and they shall never want the encouragement of his smile, or the cheering, comforting word of his promise. This text is a message sent to such faithful ones. It contrasts the grounds on which the confidence of the true Israel rests with the grounds of confidence which those were trying to fashion for themselves who wished to live in sin and self-will. Whatever might be the appearances of things, *their* foundations would surely prove in the day of trial to be "refuges of lies." However it may be despised, the old Zion-Foundation would be found to abide firm—a tried Stone, a sure Foundation, in the days of flood and storm. The best of all commentaries on this text, and its associated verses, is found in the figure with which our Lord closed the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord translated the Zion-Foundation for us, setting it out so plainly that none need misunderstand. God's safe foundation is just this—Hearing his words, and doing them. He that builds his life and his hope on that foundation "shall never be moved."

I. THE FOUNDATION-PRINCIPLE OF MORALS AND RELIGION. By "morals" we mean right relations with our fellow-men. By "religion" we mean right relations with God. Both these lie on one and the same foundation-principle. The prophet spoke to the men of Jerusalem and Judah, who were familiar with the temple of Solomon. He bids them look at its foundations, and especially observe how all the temple was reared upon the majestic stone laid at the corner that juts out into the valley, the massive stone that lies in its place to-day just as they set it in Solomon's time—a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. But he reminds them that the temple, its courts, and its worship, represented and symbolized the Jewish people, as a nation consecrated to God, and so that foundation-stone represented the first, the essential principle of the national life, which was this—full consecration to God, in trust, obedience, and righteousness. They were a people pledged in a covenant with Jehovah. Their pledge was the foundation-stone of their national life. That pledge they expressed thus: "The Lord our God will we serve, and him only will we obey." When they passed to a life of self-will they shifted from the true foundation. But so long as that old temple stood in the centre of the land, it spoke out, day and night, its unceasing reproach. "Other Foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Translated into Christian form by St. Peter (1 Epist. ii. 6, 8), the spiritual Foundation is Christ; and we are to be building day by day, stone by stone, on the foundation-principle which Christ laid for us in his own consecrated life—the principle of full obedience to God, rendered in a spirit of trustful, childlike humility and love. There is really but one antagonistic principle of life to this. It may gain various forms and expressions, but they are shapes assumed by one body. The principle is this—life for self, the making of self our foundation.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF RAISING A NOBLE LIFE ON THIS FOUNDATION. Foundations usually do no more than give stability to a building, but a moral foundation does more than this—it gives character to all that is reared upon it. Let a man's foundation for life be a determination to win material success, and it will surely tone everything he does with energy and perseverance. Life touched and inspired with this principle of trustful obedience to God cannot fail to be noble, because it will: 1. Be pure; the charm of the "right" will lie on everything. 2. Be generous; because living out of self and for *God* involves living out of self and for *others*. 3. Be God-like; for the very things which God approves and seeks we also shall approve and seek.

III. THE SECURITY OF THE CHARACTER AND LIFE RAISED ON THIS FOUNDATION.

This is expressed in the figure of the last clause. As repeated in Scripture it takes three forms. 1. Shall not make haste, or hurry out of his house when calamity seems to threaten. 2. Shall not be ashamed when the angels come to test the character of the life. 3. Shall not be confounded when the days of storm threaten to overwhelm. We are each one of us raising a temple—the temple of a character, of a life. Concerning our work we may well ask two searching questions. It is on the one sure Foundation? Are we raising it in a manner that is worthy of the Foundation?—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Man's inability to order his own life.* This verse is very possibly a popular proverb, which suggested a condition of painful uneasiness. Matthew Henry gives, briefly and suggestively, its meaning as used here by Isaiah, and as applicable to us: "Those that do not build upon Christ as their Foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves; they never can be easy, safe, or warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow." This line of thought may be followed out, and duly illustrated. First make a fair and true picture of a human life fashioned by the man himself. Let him win good measures of success; and let him stand forth the envy of his fellows. Let us see the bed he makes for himself to lie on; and the coverlet with which he proposes to wrap himself up—a fine bed, a beautiful coverlet. But all life-creations have to be tested; they must be "tried so as by fire." Let us see this human life tested. Time tests; success tests; trouble tests; the true Man, Christ Jesus, as our standard, tests; the future tests. How does the self-ordered life stand these testings? It is plain—

I. THAT THE SELF-ORDERED LIFE ONLY MEETS THE BODILY NEEDS, AND PROVES SHORT FOR THESE.

II. IT ONLY MEETS THE MENTAL NEEDS, AND IS SHORT FOR THESE.

III. IT ONLY MEETS THE SOCIAL NEEDS, AND IS SHORT FOR THESE.

IV. IT MAKES NO PROVISIONS FOR THE SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL NEEDS, and every advancing year makes these more and more the supremely important ones. Verily "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Then what can he do? What should he do? (see ch. xxvii. 5).—R. T.

Ver. 27.—*God in material things illustrates God in moral things.* The precise purpose for which this illustration from agricultural customs is introduced by the prophet is much disputed. We note that Isaiah declares the skill which the farmer shows in choosing his times and adapting his methods, comes directly from God; and this suggests two points for treatment.

I. MAN PLAINLY WANTS GOD FOR THE GETTING OF HIS DAILY BREAD.

II. HOW MUCH MORE, THEN, DOES HE WANT GOD FOR THAT BREAD WHICH SHALL FEED THE SOUL UNTO EVERLASTING LIFE!—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*God's work in men's minds and wills.* The literal translation of the last clause of this verse is, "He makes counsel wonderful, he makes wisdom great." The husbandman's treatment of his crop, no less than his preparation of the soil, is a dictate of experience under Divine teaching. But these things are not chiefly matters of hand and arm; they are matters of thought, mind, judgment, will, decision. The handicraft in a farm is the carrying out of decisions of mind and resolves of will. This is true of all the business life of men; the bodily activities follow upon mental activities, and we are reminded that God is at the very beginnings, the secret sources of things, presiding over movement of thought and impulse of will. The consideration of this topic may be used to correct our constant disposition to close up *parts* of our being and our life from God, giving him access only to some of them. We may consider—

I. THE MAKER OF MAN'S MIND AND WILL SURELY KNOWS THEM. The thought of our bodies, set by their five senses in relation to the material world, was altogether the thought of God. But it is harder to realize that the endowment of a mental nature is also a thought of God. It is harder because our mental nature is subject to growth; and we can separate the idea of growth from God. And it is yet harder for us to realize that the partial independence of the creature, in the trust of *free-will*, is also a thought of God, because that very independence leads us to shake off all sense of God. Yet the fact remains that he made us, and he knows us altogether.

II. THE MAKER OF MAN'S MIND AND WILL SURELY CONTROLS THEM. We must recognize that both mind and will are under strict limitations. Men think and think on, but at length the brain-agent breaks down, or they get beyond themselves, and talk vague folly. And to the most strong-willed, the authoritative voice presently comes, saying, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no further." Constantly man cries, "I would, but I cannot, for God holds me in."

III. THE MAKER OF MAN'S MIND AND WILL SURELY INSPIRES THEM. This is his gracious and helpful relation to them; and this depends on the attitude in which men place themselves towards him. In conclusion, show what the right attitude is; and what hinders us from taking it; and how the hindrance may be overcome. This will lead to a declaration of the gospel message.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Vers. 1—4.—A WARNING TO JERUSALEM. Expostulation is followed by threats. The prophet is aware that all his preaching to the authorities in Jerusalem (ch. xxviii. 14—22) will be of no avail, and that their adoption of measures directly antagonistic to the commands of God will bring on the very evil which they are seeking to avert, and cause Jerusalem to be actually besieged by her enemies. In the present passage he distinctly announces the siege, and declares that it will commence within a year.

Ver. 1.—**Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!** "Ariel" is clearly a mystic name for Jerusalem, parallel to "Sheshach" as a name for Babylon (Jer. xxv. 26) and "'Ir-ha-heres" as a name for Heliopolis (ch. xix. 18). It is generally explained as equivalent to Ari-El, "lion of God;" but Delitzsch suggests the meaning of "hearth of God," or "altar of God," a signification which "Ariel" seems to have in Ezek. xliii. 15, 16. But there is no evidence that "Ariel" was ever employed in this sense before the time of Ezekiel. Etymologically, "Ariel" can only mean "lion of God," and the name would in this sense be sufficiently descriptive of the Jewish capital, which had always hitherto been a sort of champion of Jehovah—a warrior fighting his battles with a lion's courage and fierceness. **Dwelt**; literally, *pitched his tent*—an expression recalling the old tent-life of the Hebrews (comp. 1 Kings xii. 16). **Add ye year to year**; rather, *a year to a year*; i.e. the coming year to the present one. The intention is to date the commencement of the siege. It will fall within the year next ensuing. **Let them kill sacrifices.** The best modern authorities translate, "Let *the feasts run their round*" (Kay, Cheyne, Delitzsch); *i.e.* let there be one more round of the annual festival-times, and then let the enemy march in and commence the siege.

Ver. 2.—**Yet will I distress Ariel**; rather, *and then will I distress Ariel.* The sense runs on from the preceding verse. **There shall be heaviness and sorrow.** Mr. Cheyne's "moaning and bemoaning" represents the Hebrew play upon words better. The natural consequence of the siege would be a constant cry of woe. **And it shall be unto me as Ariel.** It would be better to translate, "*Yet* she shall be unto me as Ariel." The meaning is that, though distressed and straitened, Jerusalem shall still through all be able by God's help to answer to her name of "Ariel"—to behave as a lion when attacked by the hunters.

Ver. 3.—**I will camp against thee round about**; *i.e.* "I will bring armed men against thee who shall encamp around the entire circuit of thy walls." There was small chance of forcing an entrance into Jerusalem on any side except the north; but, in order to distress and harass her, an enemy with numerous forces would dispose them all round the walls, thus preventing all ingress or egress (see Luke xix. 43). **And . . . lay siege against thee with a mount**; or, *with a mound.* Artificial mounds were raised up against the walls of cities by the Assyrians, as a foundation from which to work their battering-rams with greater advantage against the upper and weaker portion of the defences (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 80). **And . . . raise forts against thee.** "Forts" were usually movable, and accompanied the battering-ram for its better protection. Archers in the forts cleared the walls of their defenders, while the ram was employed in making a breach (see Layard, 'Monuments of Nineveh,' Second Series, pl. 21).

Ver. 4.—**Thy speech shall be low.** The feeble cries of a people wasted and worn out by a long siege are intended. These cries would resemble those which seemed to come out of the ground when a necromancer professed to raise a ghost. The

Hebrew *'ohv* is used both of the necromancers (Lev. xix. 31; xx. 6, etc.) and of the ghosts which they professed to raise (1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8; 2 Kings xx. 6, etc.). Here the "ghost" is spoken of. **Thy speech shall whisper**; literally, *chirp* (comp. ch. viii. 19). The word used occurs only in Isaiah.

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Ver. 5.—**Moreover**; rather, *but*. The relation of vers. 5—8 to vers. 1—4 is that of contrast. **The multitude of thy strangers**; *i.e.* "of thy enemies" (comp. ch. xxv. 5). In primitive societies every stranger is an enemy; and hence language—the formation of primitive men—often has one word for the two ideas. In Latin *hostis* is said to have originally meant "foreigner" (Cic., 'De Off.,' i. 12). **Shall be like small dust.** Ground down, *i.e.* to an impalpable powder—rendered utterly weak and powerless. The meaning is determined by the clause which follows, with which it must necessarily be in close accordance. **As chaff that passeth away.** "Chaff," in Scripture, is always a metaphor for weakness (comp. ch. v. 24; xvii. 13; xxxiii. 11; xli. 15; and see also Ps. i. 4; xxxv. 5; Job xxi. 18; Hos. xiii. 3; Dan. ii. 35; Zeph. ii. 2). It has no value; man's object is to get rid of it: a light wind carries it away, and no one inquires whither. **Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.** Dr. Kay says it is "the collapse of Jerusalem" which is here intended. But most other commentators understand, with more reason, the collapse of her enemies (Cheyne, Delitzsch, Vance Smith, Knobel, etc.).

Ver. 6.—**Thou shalt be visited**; literally, *shall there be a visitation*. On whom the visitation will fall is not expressed; but the context shows that it is on the enemies of Judah. The terrible nature of the visitation is signified by an enumeration of the most fearful of God's judgments—"thunder, earthquake, great noise, whirlwind, tempest, and a flame of devouring fire." *All* the expressions are probably metaphorical.

Ver. 7.—**Her munition**; *i.e.* her defences—the walls and towers in which she put her trust (comp. ver. 3). **As a dream of a night vision.** "The baseless fabric of a vision," when it has once passed by, "leaves not a wrack behind." The entire host of the "terrible ones" would melt away and disappear, as a night vision before the light of day—it would dissolve into nothing, vanish, leave no trace.

Ver. 8.—**It shall be even as when an hungry man dreameth.** The melting away of the vision would involve a keen disappointment. The enemies of Israel had expected to secure a most valuable prey. They had dreamed of a rich booty when they should take the city—a booty which would reward them for all the hardships of their marches, their watches, their toils in the siege, the dangers to which they exposed themselves in the assaults. It was as if a hungry man had dreamed that he was engaged in a feast, or a thirsty man that he was drinking deep at a banquet, when suddenly he wakes up, and finds that he has been merely dreaming, and that there is no reality in his fancies. Dr. Kay quotes a passage which is much to the point from Mungo Park's journals: "No sooner had I shut my eyes than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land. There, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear streams with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but, alas! disappointment awaked me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa." Those engaged in the siege, while themselves vanishing away, would likewise find their dreams of plunder vanish, and would bitterly feel the disappointment. **That fight against Mount Zion.** To attack Jerusalem was to fight against the mount of God, the place where Jehovah had "set his Name," and where he condescended in some true sense to *dwell* continually. How could those who engaged in such an enterprise hope to succeed?

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groves, and broken in pieces the brazen serpent," because the people burnt incense to it (2 Kings xviii. 4). But her religion was a *mere* lip-service, which God detested—it was outward, formal, hypocritical (comp. ch. i. 11—17). Jerusalem, therefore, no less than Samaria, deserved and would receive a severe chastisement. **But have removed their heart far from me.** Here lies the gist of the charge. It was not that there was too much outward religion, but that there was no inward religion corresponding to it. Lip-service without inward religion is a mockery, though it is not always felt as such. **Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.** Mr. Cheyne conjectures that ritual books had been already published by the authority of the priests, and that these were followed, on account of the human authority which had issued them, without any reference to the Law. Thus ritual obedience became mere obedience to "the precept of men."

Ver. 14.—**I will proceed to do a marvellous work.** Commentators are not agreed what this "marvellous work" was. Some, with Delitzsch, consider it to be the hardening of the hearts of the Jews to such an extent that even the appearance of wisdom and understanding, which the rulers of the people had hitherto retained, would completely disappear. Others, with Mr. Cheyne, regard it as the coming siege, with those extreme sufferings and perils (vers. 3, 4) which the Jews would have to undergo—sufferings and perils barely consistent with the previous covenant-promises made to the nation. It is difficult to decide between these two views; but, on the whole, Mr. Cheyne's view seems preferable. **A marvellous work and a wonder**; rather, *a marvellous work and a marvel.* The repetition is for the sake of emphasis. **For the wisdom**; rather, *and the wisdom*; i.e. "when I do my marvel, *then* the wisdom of the wise men shall perish"—all their crafty designs and plans shall be of no avail, but come wholly to nought. The chief of these designs was that alluded to in the next verse.

Ver. 15.—**Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord.** The allusion is to the schemes which were afloat for calling in the aid of Egypt. As Isaiah had long since denounced these schemes as the height of folly (ch. xix. 11—17), and prophesied their failure (ch. xx. 5, 6), every effort was made to conceal them from his knowledge and from the knowledge of all who were like-minded (comp. ch. xxx. 1, 2). Steps were probably even now being taken for the carrying out of the schemes, which were studiously concealed from the prophet. **Their works are in the dark.** Underhand proceedings are at all times suspicious. "Men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*" The very fact of concealment was an indication that the works in which the rulers were engaged were evil, and that they knew them to be evil. **They say, Who seeth us?** (comp. Ps. lxxiii. 11, "Tush, they say, How should God perceive? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"). The wicked persuade themselves that God does not see their actions.

Ver. 16.—**Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay**; rather, *O for your perverseness! Shall the potter be reckoned as clay?* They were so perverse and wrong-headed that they inverted the relation in which they stood to God and God to them. God was to be passive, or merely give opportunities of action, and *they* were to mould their own plans and carve out their own destiuies. **For shall the work say, etc.?** rather, *for the work saith.* Taking their destinies into their own hands was equivalent to saying that they were their own masters, which they could not be if God made them. **Shall the thing framed say, etc.?** rather, *yea, the thing formed hath said.* To refuse to take counsel of God, and direct the national policy by the light of their own reason, was to tax God with having **no understanding.**

Vers. 17—24.—A RENEWAL OF PROMISE. God's judgment (ver. 14), whatever it is, will pass. In a little while there will be a great change. The lowly will be exalted, the proud abased. From the "meek" and "poor" will be raised a body of true worshippers, who will possess spiritual discernment (ver. 18), while the oppressors and "scorners" will be brought to nought. *When* Isaiah expected this change is uncertain; but he holds out the hope of it here, as elsewhere so frequently (ch. i. 24—31; ii. 2—5; iv. 2—6; v. 13, etc.), to keep up the spirits of the people and prevent them from sinking into a state of depression and despair.

Ver. 17.—**Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field.** Lebanon, the wild forest, shall become smiling garden-ground, while garden-ground shall revert into wild uncultivated forest. An inversion of the moral condition of Judæa is shadowed forth by the metaphor.

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groves, and broken in pieces the brazen serpent," because the people burnt incense to it (2 Kings xviii. 4). But her religion was a *mere* lip-service, which God detested—it was outward, formal, hypocritical (comp. ch. i. 11—17). Jerusalem, therefore, no less than Samaria, deserved and would receive a severe chastisement. **But have removed their heart far from me.** Here lies the gist of the charge. It was not that there was too much outward religion, but that there was no inward religion corresponding to it. Lip-service without inward religion is a mockery, though it is not always felt as such. **Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.** Mr. Cheyne conjectures that ritual books had been already published by the authority of the priests, and that these were followed, on account of the human authority which had issued them, without any reference to the Law. Thus ritual obedience became mere obedience to "the precept of men."

Ver. 14.—**I will proceed to do a marvellous work.** Commentators are not agreed what this "marvellous work" was. Some, with Delitzsch, consider it to be the hardening of the hearts of the Jews to such an extent that even the appearance of wisdom and understanding, which the rulers of the people had hitherto retained, would completely disappear. Others, with Mr. Cheyne, regard it as the coming siege, with those extreme sufferings and perils (vers. 3, 4) which the Jews would have to undergo—sufferings and perils barely consistent with the previous covenant-promises made to the nation. It is difficult to decide between these two views; but, on the whole, Mr. Cheyne's view seems preferable. **A marvellous work and a wonder**; rather, *a marvellous work and a marvel.* The repetition is for the sake of emphasis. **For the wisdom**; rather, *and the wisdom*; i.e. "when I do my marvel, *then* the wisdom of the wise men shall perish"—all their crafty designs and plans shall be of no avail, but come wholly to nought. The chief of these designs was that alluded to in the next verse.

Ver. 15.—**Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord.** The allusion is to the schemes which were afloat for calling in the aid of Egypt. As Isaiah had long since denounced these schemes as the height of folly (ch. xix. 11—17), and prophesied their failure (ch. xx. 5, 6), every effort was made to conceal them from his knowledge and from the knowledge of all who were like-minded (comp. ch. xxx. 1, 2). Steps were probably even now being taken for the carrying out of the schemes, which were studiously concealed from the prophet. **Their works are in the dark.** Underhand proceedings are at all times suspicious. "Men love darkness rather than light, *because their deeds are evil.*" The very fact of concealment was an indication that the works in which the rulers were engaged were evil, and that they knew them to be evil. **They say, Who seeth us?** (comp. Ps. lxxiii. 11, "Tush, they say, How should God perceive? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"). The wicked persuade themselves that God does not see their actions.

Ver. 16.—**Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay**; rather, *O for your perverseness! Shall the potter be reckoned as clay?* They were so perverse and wrong-headed that they inverted the relation in which they stood to God and God to them. God was to be passive, or merely give opportunities of action, and *they* were to mould their own plans and carve out their own destinies. **For shall the work say, etc.?** rather, *for the work saith.* Taking their destinies into their own hands was equivalent to saying that they were their own masters, which they could not be if God made them. **Shall the thing framed say, etc.?** rather, *yea, the thing formed hath said.* To refuse to take counsel of God, and direct the national policy by the light of their own reason, was to tax God with having no understanding.

Vers. 17—24.—A RENEWAL OF PROMISE. God's judgment (ver. 14), whatever it is, will pass. In a little while there will be a great change. The lowly will be exalted, the proud abased. From the "meek" and "poor" will be raised a body of true worshippers, who will possess spiritual discernment (ver. 18), while the oppressors and "scorners" will be brought to nought. *When* Isaiah expected this change is uncertain; but he holds out the hope of it here, as elsewhere so frequently (ch. i. 24—31; ii. 2—5; iv. 2—6; v. 13, etc.), to keep up the spirits of the people and prevent them from sinking into a state of depression and despair.

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life. The sufferings of the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the siege were no doubt, in some measure, punishments. 1. For the national sin of unfaithfulness. 2. For the particular sins of the sufferers. But this is not a full account of the matter. Jerusalem suffered also—

II. BECAUSE SHE NEEDED CHASTISEMENT AND WOULD BE THE BETTER FOR IT. Jerusalem was still undergoing her probation. There were hopes of her turning to God. Nay, she did from time to time partially turn, and her actual destruction was deferred for above a century after that of her sister, Samaria. The sufferings of the siege were in the main intended to bring the sufferers to repentance—to humble proud hearts, to bend stubborn wills, to show the vanity of earthly supports and stays, and induce entire dependence and trust in God. "Ariel" was punished far more in love than in wrath. She was still to God "as Ariel." Her "woe" was not the final woe pronounced on the hopelessly impenitent, but the woe which, while it is grievous at the time of its infliction, "nevertheless afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11).

Vers. 5—8.—*The disappointment that awaits God's enemies.* All the enemies of God have, some day or other, an awaking. The designs which they cherish, the selfish hopes in which they indulge, are mere dreams. Even when the dreams are realized the result is disappointing. No man ever yet found the pleasure of success equal to his expectation. If there is a little satisfaction at first, fruition soon begets satiety. "Vanity of vanities," says the preacher, "*all* is vanity." But, for the most part, the dreams are not realized. God arises, and his enemies are scattered; those that hate him have to flee before him (Ps. lxviii. 1). The schemer finds himself baffled just when he thinks success most certain. Dishonesty is detected; the bubble of speculation bursts; unexpected obstacles arise; a sudden death or a sudden outbreak of war deranges the best-laid plans: the fortune just about to be made vanishes into the air, the dreamer "awakes, and his soul is empty"—all his hopes have passed away "at an instant suddenly." There is but one security against constant disappointment, which is to trust all to God, to have no will but his, no desire but that expressed in the prayer, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

Vers. 9, 10.—*Two kinds of spiritual blindness.* Spiritual blindness is not the natural condition of man. God has given to all men a certain power of spiritual discernment. He is "the Light which lighteth *every man that cometh into the world*" (John i. 9). Children are invariably found to be teachable at an early age—to have a power of receiving and appreciating spiritual verities. The spiritually blind have become such, and in their condition we may trace two stages.

I. THE INITIAL STAGE. The commencement of spiritual blindness is a wilful shutting of the eyes. Instead of seeking to see, striving to see, looking out for the spiritual in life and action, men turn away from it, "wink with their eyes," put veils over them, refuse to let the light of truth shine in upon their understandings. They "love darkness rather than light" (John iii. 19). The whole of life should be a continual exercise of the spiritual discerning power. Men give the power as little exercise as possible. They weaken it by disuse. After a while they deprave it, so that its judgments become uncertain—even false.

II. THE FINAL STAGE. In Scripture the final stage is called "a reprobate mind," literally, "an undistinguishing mind (ἀδοκίμου νοῦς)." By the law of God's providence, the wilful shutting of the eyes leads on to an inability to see. The moral vision becomes actually distorted. The "light that is within a man" becomes "darkness;" and then, "how great is that darkness!" "Bitter is put for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (ch. v. 20), "good for evil, and evil for good." The state is hopeless, irremediable. It results naturally from the repeated sins against light of the first stage; but it is none the less God's judgment upon the sinner. Hence it has been called "judicial blindness"—an expressive name.

Vers. 13, 14.—*God's hatred of mere lip-service.* Lip-service is offensive to God on two accounts.

I. IT IS DISHONOURING TO HIMSELF. It implies, either that he has not the power

of reading the heart and of perceiving when worship is rendered to him sincerely and when feignedly, or that he does not care which kind of homage he receives, whether adoration is offered to him really or formally. In the one case he must be considered as a Being of very limited power and capacity; in the other, as a Being indifferent to the gravest moral distinctions. To profess loyalty to an earthly monarch without feeling it would be to insult him grossly. How much more to seek to pass such a cheat on the King of heaven!

II. IT IS DEGRADING TO THE CREATURES WHICH HE HAS MADE IN HIS OWN IMAGE All falsehood is degrading to those who condescend to it. False pretences, flatteries, insincere professions of love and devotion for the purpose of winning favour and approval from those to whom we address them, are among the basest and most contemptible acts to which a human being can stoop. They are lies, and lies which have their origin in downright unadulterated selfishness. False professions made to God are also foolish, idiotic lies, which cannot possibly impose on the Being who is the Object of them, and which do not very often impose even on such of our fellow-men as witness them. It was their insincere "lip-service" which caused our Lord to denounce the scribes and Pharisees of his time as "actors," or "hypocrites" (Matt. xv. 7; Mark vii. 6).

Vers. 17—24.—*Religious revivals.* It is sometimes supposed that religious revivals are modern inventions, concessions to the weakness of the degenerate man of the nineteenth century; and no doubt there have been features in many so-called "revivals" which have justified this view of them. But, in point of fact, revivals, if we follow out the history of religion, are found to be movements which have belonged to all ages, and without which it appears more than probable that religion in this world would stagnate and lose all vital energy. The subject may be best viewed under three heads.

I. REVIVALISM IS A LAW OF NATURE. Not only does Nature annually revive in spring from her winter's trance, but throughout the universe exhaustion is continually occurring at irregular intervals, and recoveries from exhaustion, *i.e.* revivals, are the only mode by which Nature is recruited and enabled to maintain herself. A long series of wet and cold seasons produces at any rate the impression that Nature's productive powers are declining and wearing out; when, suddenly, there is a complete inversion of what had come to be regarded as an established order, and a summer of brilliant sunshine causes an overflowing harvest and an agricultural reaction. The ozone in the atmosphere, so essential to human health, decreases (it may be) for months; then, all at once, there is a revival, and the average of a century is exceeded. Electrical phenomena are for a time in abeyance, and the earth seems to have "used up" the power on which her vitality principally depends; when, lo! the reaction comes, fresh electricity is developed, or conveyed to the earth from without, and electrical phenomena become more frequent and more striking than ever.

II. REVIVALISM IS CONSISTENT WITH, AND CONDUCIVE TO, A CONSTANT ADVANCE. *A priori* we might have expected that all growth and progress would have been regular and gradual. But the fact is otherwise. In all the fields of human energy, in art, in science, in philosophy, in religion, long periods of comparative deadness and apathy occur, during which there is scarcely any perceptible advance at all, followed by shorter intervals of activity and energy, when progress is made "by leaps and bounds." The scientific energy of the last half-century is a case in point. The artistic revival initiated by Reynolds and Gainsborough, is another. The history of the Church, dispassionately viewed, shows a manifest progress; but the progress has been far from uniform. Many centuries have been centuries of stagnation. Religion has just kept itself alive, and that has been all. Then some stir has come from within or from without, and a rush of vitality has supervened, which has exercised an influence for good on all later times. Indifference to doctrinal truth was overspreading the world, when the dogmatic revival of the fourth century at once saved the faith, and advanced it. The expansion of the Church, which is a special mark of its life, had almost ceased, when missionary zeal broke out suddenly in the West, and the seventh and eighth centuries saw the conversion of England, Scotland, Friesland, Batavia, Switzerland, and most of Germany. A general deadness and dulness had come over Christendom between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, when the Crusades, which were a political necessity, produced the revival of the twelfth and thirteenth. The greatest

revival of all was the Reformation, which recovered spiritual religion when it seemed almost lost, and exerted a purifying influence even on those parts of Christendom which most opposed it. Lesser revivals have been—in Germany Pietism, in France Jansenism, among ourselves Methodism and the Church movement still in progress. It seems scarcely too much to say that, without revivals, religion—even the Christian religion—would perish.

III. REVIVALS ARE MOST COMMONLY THE RESULT OF CHASTISEMENTS. As it was with the Jews of whom Isaiah wrote, so in the Christian Church generally, revivals have been produced by judgments. The blasphemies of Arius, and the patronage of Arianism by the court, gave rise to the counter-movement of Athanasius. The contraction of Christendom in the East by the conquests of Mohammed and his immediate successors led on to its expansion in the West by renewed missionary effort. The alarming progress of the Saracens and Turks caused the revival connected with the Crusades. The exactions and tyranny of the court of Rome, being felt as a burden that could no longer be borne, brought about the Reformation. Among ourselves, the revival which dates from 1830 was due to the loss of ten Irish bishoprics and the other attacks made on the Church by her enemies at that period. Methodism is about the only Christian revival not provoked by some manifest calamity.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*Concerning Ariel.* I. VICISSITUDES OF ARIEL. The name is symbolic, perhaps signifying "God's lion." It was the city where David dwelt. The prophet bids the city enter upon the new year, and run the round of the feasts. The distress will come, and the city, true to her name, will be mourning like a wounded lioness; and yet her prowess will be seen. She will be beleaguered, the mound for the battering-ram will be set up; she will be abased, and her low voice will be like the muttering of a ghost from the under-world. Then a sudden change will occur, and the multitude of foes will be dispersed like dust or chaff in the wind. After the noise as of thunder and earthquake and hurricane, menacing absolute extinction of the city, the vast host will disappear like a dream and vision of the night. They too will dream of conquest, as a hungry and thirsty man dreams of meat and drink; and their hope will melt with the morning light.

II. THE BLINDNESS OF THE PEOPLE. Those who listen are astonished at a prophecy which nothing in the past appears to warrant. The prophet takes occasion to explain the cause of their blindness and stupefaction, and to warn them that they may find this their fixed condition. They are responsible for this state, he seems to imply when he says, "Astonish yourselves!" "Blind yourselves!" Some strange prepossession causes them to act like men intoxicated; their *reason* reels and staggers. A deep sleep is poured upon them; their eyes are closed, and their hands wrapped up in Oriental fashion. The result is they cannot see the truth. The "vision and the faculty divine," so bright and eminent in the prophet, is not recognized for what it is. His words are like a sealed book in the hands of a reader. He can read, but cannot loose the seals of the book, which is so far like that described in Rev. v. 2. Or again, if a book, though open and legible, be handed to one that cannot read, the result is the same. It may be a large tablet, with large characters, like that in ch. viii. 1, so that the passer-by, *if he can read*, may catch the meaning; but what if he cannot read? It is the same as if the writing were non-existent. 1. Seeing truth is like seeing the meaning of what we read. All see something in the book—some little more than that it is a book; some can extract a certain superficial sense from the signs, and are asleep towards the deeper and central meaning. That meaning must be *lived out* by the whole effort of the reason, the conscience, the heart. It requires an intense effort of will to see any object as it ought to be seen. 2. *Absence of spiritual intelligence infers guilt.* Men *will not see*, because the sight is too painful, or some other sight is more pleasurable and more easy to take in. Moral obtuseness is another word for want of conscience, or for inertness of conscience.—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*Lip-service and dissimulation.* I. THE SEMBLANCE WITHOUT THE

REALITY OF RELIGION. To "draw men" is a Scripture phrase full of expressiveness for true worship. To draw near to God is to assume our holiest mood of feeling; it is to humble one's self in the presence of the Highest and Holiest. The distance between ourselves and the Supreme is not to be overcome by an effort of thought; it is in the sphere of intelligence that that distance is most deeply felt, which mere thought and study only increase. In the region of feeling only can that distance be diminished or made to disappear. As we kneel in our weakness and abandon all our self-supports, the heavens seem to stoop to us, and the arms of the Almighty are thrown about us. Pride, dishonesty, low self-seeking,—these throw the soul far, far asunder from its God. From the reverent and the obedient he is never far off. But so beautiful is this action of drawing near to God, so truly ennobling to our manhood, it is certain, like all the genuine moods and acts of religion, to be mimicked and counterfeited. All hypocrisy is a testimony to the grandeur of that which is copied or caricatured. This imitation of true religion may be carried out in *speech*. Nothing more easy than to learn by heart the great phrases of Scripture concerning spiritual religion, and to repeat them; and make the verbal not express, but hide the absence of, the real. And so magical is the effect of sacred and beautiful words on the ear and on the heart, for the time they may create an illusion, and it may seem that we have really felt what we have done little more than utter. Again, *respect for mere custom* may take the place of respect for God. "Their fear of me is nothing but a commandment of men, which is taught." Religion is part of social institutions—it is decorous, it is advantageous to pay it outward respect, unsafe to contemn it. Thus fear of men and self-interest may really pass under the outward guise of the fear of God and his Law.

II. THE DEALING OF JEHOVAH WITH THE PEOPLE. It will be "wonderful, very wonderful." Inconceivable, as it seems, running counter to all his ancient covenant-promises. Already the Assyrian invasion had broken in on them; and the visitation was not to cease, but to continue. These judgments will baffle their intelligence. The wisdom of the wise will perish, and the understanding of the intelligent be obscured. The politicians think to hide their thoughts and deeds from Jehovah, "to throw the veil of secrecy over their pursuit of worldly alliances. The prophet divines their purpose and exposes its perversity. The favourite comparison of the potter is introduced (cf. ch. xlv. 9; lxiv. 8; Jer. xviii. 6; Rom. ix. 20)" (Cheyne). Hiding from Jehovah means here the same thing as hiding from the prophet of Jehovah. They did not wish to listen to Isaiah's reproof. We seem to see them watching the prophet (cf. ch. viii. 12). And he, from amidst the light of the higher or eternal policy, sees through their time-serving intrigues. "They think they can dispense with Jehovah, and yet they are his creatures; they attribute cleverness to themselves, and practically disown him, as if the pot should say to the potter who has turned it, 'He does not understand it'" (Delitzsch). The great lessons are: 1. *The short-sightedness of worldly wisdom.* It sees so clearly the immediate interest to be gained, it ignores the distant future, and falls headlong into fallacy. 2. *The far-sightedness of conscience.* The prophet represents conscience. What is now right is profitable now and ever will be. And only the real and the sincere is the right. Men may be deceived and mocked for a time; but "be not deceived: God is not mocked."—J.

Vers. 17—24.—*A time of regeneration.* A time of refreshing and of renewal is, notwithstanding all the gloom of preceding pictures, at hand.

I. THE CHANGE IN NATURE. "One of Isaiah's most characteristic ideas is a future transformation of nature corresponding to that of man" (Cheyne). The forest will be turned into the garden-land. Lebanon stands for the wild or uncultivated land (cf. ch. x. 18, 34). The passage in ch. xxxii. 15 is parallel. When God again begins to bless his people, the untilled land will become a cultivated country, and the fields will produce an abundance compared with which their present condition may be pronounced barren. The meaning may be both literal and symbolical. When human energy is renewed, so is the face of nature, which saddens with war, pestilence, and the depression of industry. And the turning of waste land into cultivated fields is typical of the regeneration of human life; for what is all depravity and misery, but thought, faculty, passion, run to waste?

II. SIGNS OF THE NEW LIFE. The deaf will hear the words of a writing, and the

blind shall be brought out of gloom and darkness into new spiritual perception, the lowly hearted shall receive a fresh access of joy in Jehovah, and the poor shall exult in the Holy One of Israel. Notice everywhere the loving spirit of the gospel. Ever it is good news to those who need that news the most—the ignorant, the humble, and the poor. And correspondingly, the proud and the self-sufficient are to be brought low. The terrible foe without, and the scornful foes within, will have vanished and be brought to nought. The prophetic message in every age is vehement, burning against oppression and treachery. There are men that watch for iniquity, that swear away others' lives by false testimony, or seek to ruin those who plead in the gate or judicial court, and wrest the just verdict from the righteous by frivolous pretences. (For the expression, "turning aside the right" of the weak, etc., cf. Exod. xxiii. 6; Amos v. 12; Mal. iii. 5.) Traitors, conspirators, false witnesses, and false men of every kind will be rooted out of the new kingdom; and all that is incorrigible will be given up to destruction, that there may be room for the plants of Jehovah's planting to flourish.

III. THE HOLY AND HAPPY CONSUMMATION. No more shall Jacob be ashamed and his face turn pale. His oppressors will have been swept away. He will see "his sons, the work of Jehovah's hands, within him." In presence of the judgments of Jehovah there will be a true conversion; they will become holy even as he is holy—a Church sanctifying him, the Holy One of Israel. A sound intelligence will displace the former spirit of error, and former murmuring will give way to a willingness to receive instruction. This is the state of things for which we pray when we say, "Hallowed be thy Name." "They shall hallow thy Name," says the prophet; "They shall fear the God of Israel." Pure reverence, united with bright clear intelligence, and applied in every department of thought and practice, will be the spirit of the future kingdom, must be the spirit in all who sincerely pray for the coming of that kingdom in their hearts now.—J.

Ver. 13.—*Insincerity.* "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." Sincerity is the life of devotion. Eloquence in prayer is execrable if the heart be worldly and vain. Here we have Divine insight into man's soul.

I. HERE IS THE BENDED KNEE WITHOUT THE PROSTRATE HEART. Reverential manner and sacred solemnities of speech may deceive others, but with God all hearts are open, all desires known. It is mere *mouth*-worship. It is the trick of the muscles, not the tone of the heart. We resent the false man. Nothing offends the better instincts of humanity so much as deceitful mannerism. Better the "drawn sword" than the disguised enemy with fawning friendship on his lips.

II. HERE IS THE HONOUR OF THE LIPS WITHOUT THE DEVOTION OF THE LIFE. To give a place of "honour" to religion is common to the worldliest men. It is like the compliment that vice pays to virtue by imitation of its manner, and hiding of itself. What should we think of men who did not honour religion? They would be losers. Men would not trust them. They would be suspected of indifference to those bonds which hold society together. So they pay outward honour to the Almighty, they join in the Church anthem, and in the public confession of the great Christian Creeds. But in their *life* there is no honour paid to religion, inasmuch as they serve and worship other gods.

III. HERE IS THE TRUE BENDING OF THE HEART, WHICH IS THE MICROCOSM OF THE MAN. The heart is removed far from God. It does not thrill with his love, nor beat in sympathy with his claims. This is the loadstone that leads us everywhere. We can prophesy where the footsteps will be if we know the longings of the spirit. The *heart* that he made capable of so much endurance and affection is far from him. Then it must be somewhere else. It will find some object. The ivy torn down from the old church tower will cling to the nearest object in its path. Cling it must. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—8.—*The city of God.* "The city where David dwelt" was undoubtedly Jerusalem, the "city of God." It is here called *Ariel;* i.e., according to some, the hearth or altar of God. This fact, taken with the prophecy itself, may remind us—

I. THAT THE CITY OF GOD IS THE PLACE WHERE GOD DWELLS. It is *where his hearth is*—the "place of his abode" where he is at home with his people, where they are

"at home" with him. The true Church of Christ, the ideal Christian family or society, is that company which feels that God is with it of a truth, which realizes and rejoices in his presence.

II. THAT THE CITY OF GOD IS THE PLACE OF SACRIFICE. The "altar" of Old Testament times has for ever disappeared now that the great Sacrifice has been presented, now that the way into the holiest is open, now that nothing stands between the Divine mercy and the penitent and believing soul. But still the city of God is the place of sacrifice; for still every true servant of Christ is continually engaged in offering up "spiritual sacrifices" unto God. These are the offerings of *praise* (Heb. xiii. 15), of *consecration* (Rom. xii. 1), of *kindness* (Heb. xiii. 16);—these and such as these are "acceptable to God" (1 Pet. ii. 5).

III. THAT THE CITY OF GOD IS A PLACE OF REVERENT AND JOYOUS COMMUNION. "Add ye year to year," etc. (ver. 1); *i.e.* let the festivals go round from year to year. The prophet is thought to have spoken ironically, as if he would say, "Go on with your solemnities, but they will avail you nothing." However this may be, we may be sure that when Jerusalem was what Jehovah meant it to be, it was a city in which sacred festivals brought the people of God into holy and happy communion with one another and with their Divine Ruler. And when that which is now the counterpart of the city of God is what its Lord meant *it* to be, it is a place where human souls mingle in sacred fellowship, and where they all unite in reverent and happy intercourse with the Father of their spirits, with the Saviour of their souls.

IV. THAT THE CITY OF GOD MAY BE A PLACE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. "Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow," etc. (vers. 2—4). When the Church, the society, the family, or the individual soul needs Divine correction, God will send his chastisements. The Author of its peace will be the Source of its sorrow. 1. It (he) will be *as a besieged city*, as a city against which the agents of God are encamped, shut in, circumscribed, reduced to privation and distress, made to feel its feebleness, driven to cry out for help. 2. It (he) will *be humiliated*. "Thou shalt be brought down," etc. (ver. 4). Nothing so much offends God as pride, haughtiness of heart, presumption; and when this is manifested by his people, they may expect to be abased to the very dust, until their spirit has been renewed and they have learned humility under his correcting hand.

V. THAT THE CITY OF GOD IS THE OBJECT OF THE DIVINE DELIVERANCE. (Vers. 5—9.) When God arises to deliver his people, his visitation may be: 1. *Unexpected.* (Ver. 5.) When the Son of man cometh, will he find his people expecting his appearance (Luke xviii. 8)? 2. *Overwhelming.* (Vers. 6, 7.) It will (may) be as if all the elements conspired to work his will. 3. *Attended with bitterest disappointment to his foes.* (Ver. 8.)

1. See to it that this severe correction be not called for; that it is not brought down by worldliness, by formality, by selfishness, by pride, by discord, by indulgence. 2. If the hour of correction should arrive, let immediate repentance bring on at once the time of deliverance.—C.

Vers. 9—12.—*Spiritual incapacity.* Our powers, as men and women, are limited enough; and it may well be that those of God's children who move in wider spheres and are endowed with greater capacities look down in wonder, if not with amusement, on our large pretensions. Yet we talk freely of the incapable, the feeble, the helpless, as if we ourselves were strong. There *are* various degrees of power and weakness among us, but the most important belong to that kind of incapacity to which the text refers.

I. ITS DOMAIN. The prophet treats of spiritual helplessness. We see and lament *physical* incapacity in the shape of blindness, deafness, paralysis, etc. We also have to treat *mental* incapacity in the form of intellectual feebleness, decline, imbecility, insanity. But by far the saddest sight in the view of God is *spiritual* incapacity—that moral condition in which the soul has lost its native powers, is destitute of those acquirements which would enable it to stand side by side with the holiest of the heavenly world, lacks the wisdom by which it might defend itself against its adversaries, and is therefore the prey of the worst evils, forfeits its birthright, and moves towards its doom. This incapacity affects the soul in all its higher and more serious

relations—in its relation to God, to those to whom it is under obligation, to its own character.

II. ITS TWO PRINCIPAL MANIFESTATIONS. 1. *Blindness.* "The spirit of deep sleep"—the closing or covering of the eyes (ver. 10). The last, or nearly the last, effect of sin is to take away the faculty of spiritual insight; so that a man cannot see those things which a human soul ought to recognize at once, the recognition of which is indispensable to its very life; viz. the presence, the claims, the power of God; the excellency of his service; the unworthiness and insufficiency of sensual gratifications and worldly ambitions; the deathfulness of sin, etc. But to the spiritually incapable these things are as if they were not. Such souls are as unconscious of these realities as is a man in a deep sleep, or as is one whose eyes are covered, of the objects which are before him. 2. *Error.* "They stagger, but not with strong drink" (ver. 9). As a man under the influence of stimulants cannot "walk straight," but staggers from side to side or wanders out of his way altogether, so men who are robbed of their rightful powers by sin fail to walk straight on in the path of rectitude: they deviate into (1) *false notions* about God and man, about life and destiny; and into (2) evil *habits*, into sad departures from purity, from uprightness, from truth, from wisdom.

III. ITS COMPLETENESS. 1. It extends *to the highest*,—he has covered the eyes of "your rulers" (ver. 10); to those who lead and who, being blind themselves, will certainly mislead (Matt. xv. 14); to those whose social influence is strong and, in this case, most pernicious. 2. It includes *the specialists*—the privileged, those who profess to have peculiar access to truth: "The seers hath he covered." Woe to the land, to the Church, whose religious teachers are unable to see the directing finger of God, and are giving way to dreams of their own imagination! 3. It embraces those *instructed in other things*. It is not only the unlearned that cannot read at all, but the learned men also, who are blind to the truths of God (vers. 11, 12). Here, in nature, in providence, in Scripture is a glorious, three-volumed work, the full work of God; here are sacred truths which enlarge the mind and elevate the soul, which beautify and ennoble life, prepare for death, and fit for immortal blessedness. But, with powers diminished, depraved, or destroyed by sin, they who can learn other lessons and read other secrets are as undiscerning as the most illiterate boor in presence of a language of which he does not know the alphabet, as helpless as the finished scholar in presence of a roll the seal of which he cannot break!

IV. ITS EXPLANATION. How can we account for this depravation of man's spiritual powers? It is the fitting penalty of sin; it comes in the righteous judgments of God: "The Lord hath poured out upon you," etc. (ver. 10). It is the retribution attached to a guilty non-use or misuse of spiritual faculty; it is a "woe" that is always working: "From him that *hath not*"—does not use, or abuses his talents—"shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. xxv. 29).—C.

VERS. 13—17.—*The Church which God condemns.* Here is—

I. A CHURCH CONDEMNED OF GOD. It has four characteristics of which the Lord complains. 1. *Unspiritual worship.* "This people draw near me with their mouth," etc. (ver. 13). The service of the lip without the homage of the heart is an unacceptable sacrifice to God (see Ps. l.; lxxviii. 36, 37; ch. i.; Ezek. xxxiii. 31; Matt. xv. 8, 9; John iv. 24). To take sacred words into the lips with nothing of their meaning in the mind, to assume the attitude without cherishing the spirit of devotion, is not to propitiate but to offend the Holy One. 2. *Unauthorized doctrine.* "Their fear toward me is taught," etc.—rendered in the New Testament, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. xv. 9). This was an early departure from the will of Christ (see Col. ii. 18—22; Titus i. 14; Acts xx. 30). The Church has always been in danger from men who have represented, first to their own minds and then to the minds of others, their own reasonings or imaginations as if they were the pure truth of God. So the mind and will of Christ have been grievously and mischievously perverted. 3. *Incapable teachers.* "The wisdom of their wise shall perish," etc. (ver. 14). A Church fallen under the rebuke of its Lord is usually one that has wholly unsuitable and incompetent teachers—men who have lost their way, who have failed to discover or have abandoned heavenly wisdom, who cannot declare the way of life. 4. *Unenlightened members.* (Ver. 15.) So destitute of the very rudiments of religion as to ask such a

question as this, as to entertain such a thought as this. With a faulty and incapable ministry you may have a Church ignorant of those elements of the gospel with which it seems impossible that men should not be familiar.

II. THE DIVINE WARNING WHICH IS ALSO A DIVINE PROMISE. (Vers. 16, 17.) He says—You have perverted everything, turned everything upside down, made nothing of my Word when you should have made everything of it, elevated the outward and visible above the inward and spiritual, acted as if you could conceal your doings from the all-beholding God, treated me as the clay might treat the potter, unworthily and irreverently. I will bring it to pass that things shall be turned upside down in your experience: "Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field," etc. The humble shall be exalted and the proud abased. Your false confidence shall be cast down, and that which you have neglected shall be honoured in the eyes of all. The Church that has lost its first estate of truth, spirituality, wisdom, must expect a terrible reversal. 1. Its mistaken notions will be shaken from its mind to make way for God's living truth. 2. Its incapable leaders will be compelled to step down and give place to those whom they have arrogantly disregarded. 3. Its pompous but unspiritual rites will be exchanged for simpler and spiritual engagements. 4. Its luxurious religious enjoyments will be lost in earnest self-denying labours, or even in trying hardships. Thus will the fruitful field become a forest, while Lebanon is turned into a fruitful field. The revolution in the character and condition of the Church will be very intimately connected with, will be immediately followed by, a revolution in the character and condition of the world.—C.

Vers. 18—24.—*The hour of revival.* I. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. 1. *The spirit of docility.* Those once deaf now "hear the words of the book" (ver. 18); "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine" (ver. 24). It is one of the surest signs of the presence of God's Spirit that the attitude of insensibility or of captiousness is exchanged for the desire to learn the will of God—that those who once held aloof altogether or came to carp and quibble now lend a reverent, inquiring ear, sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus, look heavenwards like Paul and say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2. *The power of spiritual perception.* "The eyes of the blind shall see," etc. (ver. 18). God awakens human souls from the sleep of sin or the languor of spiritual decline. Then, *in the one case* men see the guilt of continued rebellion against God's will, also the terrible risks they run who remain rebellious, and also the excellency and openness of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ, etc.; *in the other case* they see the transcendent value of the human souls around them, the admirableness of Christian zeal, the desirableness of gaining the approval of Christ for carrying on his work of redeeming love, etc. 3. *Gladness of heart* in God and in man. (1) *In God.* "Joy in the Lord" (ver. 19) will be increased, not only on the part of the meek, but in the heart of all those who are affected by the action of Divine truth and the influence of the Divine Spirit. Men will realize the closeness, the blessedness, the nobility of their relation to God, as his children, friends, co-workers, heirs; and their souls will be lifted up and will swell with a sacred joy. (2) *In man.* Jacob "will not now be ashamed," his face will not "wax pale" (ver. 22) as he regards his children; on the contrary, he will behold them with unbounded joy when he sees them "sanctifying the Name of the Holy One" (ver. 23). The fathers and mothers in Israel, the leaders and teachers of the Church, will exult in the extension of piety and purity, of worth and wisdom, among all the people, and particularly among the young. 4. *The disappearance of iniquity.* (Vers. 20, 21.) The oppressor, the scorner, the vicious, the unrighteous,—these and such as they are removed from the scene; they no longer linger about the gates or frequent the courts or walk the streets of Jerusalem. The force of sacred fervour, like the cleansing indignation of Christ himself, sweeps unholiness from the sanctuary; "that which defileth" is cast out with the strong hand of reawakened purity.

II. THE DIVINE SOURCE OF IT. All those thus made true children of God are "the work of mine hands" (ver. 23); everything, as every one, is his workmanship; it is all of God. It is his Spirit that "renews the face of the earth," that also revives the souls of men and the condition of his Church.

III. THE HOPE OF ITS COMING. 1. We may look to *the promises of God's Word,*

that hold out to us the hope of better and brighter days in the future. 2. Or to *the grace and power of our Lord*; for we cannot believe that his yearning compassion and his mighty power will leave outside for ever the multitudes that are still afar off. 3. But we do well to look to *devout and earnest preparation on our own part*. Can we not "prepare the Lord his way" by cleansing our hearts of selfishness and sin, of pride and unbelief; by devout expectation and eager readiness for the sound of his chariot-wheels; by earnest and believing prayer for the action of his reviving Spirit?—C.

Ver. 2.—*Divine corrections through temporal distresses.* This subject may be treated in the larger spheres of nations, classes of society, or Churches, and applications may be made to individual experience. God's ways in the world of men are designed to reveal the mystery of his ways with each man. That impression which we are now gaining concerning the constancy and inexorableness of law, godly people have long had concerning the constancy and inexorableness of the Divine dealings. What God has been to one man, he has been to many, he has been to all. What God has been here, he has been there, and he has been everywhere. It is a law and order with him that he should correct men for their faults by means of temporal distresses. The calamities that come to men and nations are no accidents. In them God is working for righteousness. The term *Ariel* is one of Isaiah's favourite symbolical names. It stands for Jerusalem. The prophet exclaims, "Alas for Ariel!" because of the wrong-headedness and the wilfulness which were leading its rulers away from reliance on Jehovah to confidence in Egypt. The word "Ariel" means "God's lion," but it is not easy for us to recognize the appropriateness of the figure. Some think it may mean the *hearth*, or *altar* of God, and then the reference to "sacrifices" in ver. 1 is seen to be appropriate. Henderson, feeling that the figure of Jerusalem as a lion, devouring the *flesh* of many sacrifices, is very strained, accepts the figure of "hearth or altar," and says, "The reference is to Jerusalem as the centre of the Jewish polity, where alone it was lawful to sacrifice to Jehovah" (comp. ch. xxxi. 9). In favour of the translation, "Lion of God," it may be noticed that the lion was the emblem of the tribe of Judah. The historical reference of these verses is to the coming attack of Sennacherib's army, which would be a distress to Ariel, but would not involve her ruin. It would be a providence with the evident design of warning and correcting. It is matched by many circumstances in individual lives which are distressing rather than afflicting or overwhelming.

I. PARTICULAR EVILS IN ARIEL. Perhaps the point of reproach here is the insincerity attending the reformation which Hezekiah instituted. There is an important difference between a reformation which starts from the people and reaches to affect the throne, as in the case of Nineveh in the time of Jonah; or as in the case of the German Protestant Reformation, which was in the heart and purpose of the people before Luther found it voice; and a reformation which starts from the throne and tries to carry the people with it, as in the cases of Hezekiah and Josiah. There is the grave danger of the people's acceding to the wish of the sovereign, and the example of the court, apart from their own convictions. This was the particular evil of the time which needed correction. There were signs of religious awakening which were insincere. How insincerity in the leaders was shown in the efforts of a considerable party to turn from Jehovah and negotiate for help with Egypt! Still, we may observe the prevalence of insincerity, and the fact that "distresses" are just the fitting corrective of this evil.

II. THE DELUSION OF KEEPING UP SACRIFICES IN ARIEL. An important part of prophetical work was the denunciation of sacrifices and religious rites when the soul of meaning was lost out of them, and they expressed no devotion, no thankfulness, no love, and no consecration (see ch. i. 11—15). Here Isaiah intimates that increasing the number of festivals and multiplying sacrifices could not deceive God or hide from him the real moral and religious condition of the people. Keeping up the formalities of religion is often successful in deceiving men, but it never deceives God. This is his absolute condition, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

III. THE FORMS IN WHICH ARIEL MIGHT BE HOPEFULLY DISTRESSED. The Mosaic system had established the idea that men would be sure to *get* good things by being

good. This was founded in truth, but it involved men's having right ideas of what are "good things," and what is "being good." Men made it mean that they would be sure to get temporal blessings if they made large outward show of goodness. And therefore temporal distresses and anxieties were precisely the things that would awaken men to a sense of their mistake, and to a worthier apprehension of Divine claims. Temporal safety and blessing did *not* attend such goodness as theirs, and so they were led to suspect their goodness. So we, finding our religion fail us in the evil day, are brought to see that formal religion never can be acceptable unto him who "desires truth in the inward parts."

IV. THE ISSUE OF DIVINE DEALINGS WITH ARIEL. Here we must distinguish between the issue which God designs, and for the accomplishment of which the means he uses are appropriate, and the issue which is actually attained in consequence of man's resistant wilfulness. One of the saddest things in all human lives is the contrast between the results of distressful dispensations and the gracious designs contemplated by God in sending them. Corrections that fail to humble succeed in hardening.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*God's Word a sealed Book.* Reference is to the prophecies of Isaiah, which were evidently circulated in writing among the people; but, by reason of prevailing hypocrisy, pride, and obstinacy, they were not understood—they were like a sealed book (compare the figure in Rev. v. 2). The connection of the text may be stated thus: "The hearers stare in astonishment at a prophecy seemingly so out of relation to facts. The prophet warns them that, if they wilfully deaden their spiritual faculties, there will be no emerging afterwards from this state of blindness and stupefaction. Jehovah will judicially fix them in it. The ruling class is mainly addressed. They are spiritually asleep, with eyes closed and heads wrapped up (in Oriental fashion)."

I. GOD'S WORD IS NOT A SEALED BOOK BY DIVINE DESIGN. A curious notion has gained acceptance that the Bible could not be the Word of God if it did not contain mysteries quite beyond the possibility of man's apprehension. On the other hand, it has been well urged that God can have no need thus to "show off" his superiority; and that revelation must mean "light," "unfolding;" it can never be intended to mean "bewildering." Of this we may be sure—there is nothing in the Bible sealed from man. Whatever is there is for our understanding, for our instruction. Isaiah's prophecies, given by God's inspiration, are plain enough; he may read them who runs.

II. GOD'S WORD BECOMES A SEALED BOOK THROUGH HUMAN PERVERSITY. This may be shown: 1. In the blinding influence of prejudice. We cannot find in the Word what we do not want to find. This may be applied to national prejudice, sectarian prejudice, and personal prejudice. 2. In the closing of men's minds to the incomings and gracious illuminations and inspirations of God's Spirit. He who gives the Word gives the keys to its meanings and applications, through the guiding Spirit. It is a sealed Book if we have not the key. 3. In the judicial sealing which comes as a judgment on the perversity. This is the precise case associated with the text. These wilful rulers were determined to treat Isaiah's prophecies as a sealed book: then to them it shall be a sealed book; and when they want to understand it, they shall "weary themselves to find the door." Apply to our own relations with God's Word. The openness and suggestiveness of it is a test of our spiritual state. We must never think that God has closed it; the fact can only be that we have closed ourselves to it.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Lip-service; or, the peril of losing the heart out of our piety.* There was a time when Israel rendered heart-service to God. There was a *life* in the Mosaic system. Taking a figure from the sacrifice which Noah offered as consecrating a regenerate earth unto God, there was "a savour of a sweet smell" to rise up to God. The reproach of Isaiah is that the sacrifice was left, but the savour was gone; the husk was left, but the kernel was gone; the form was left, the heart was gone; the voice still spoke, but it had no message to deliver. "They draw near with lip, but heart is far away." And still, whensoever personal piety is failing, men fall back on some past experiences, or else they exaggerate the mere formalities of religious worship and ordinance. Ages of strong faith are very independent of forms. Ages of failing faith always exaggerate forms. If we have little heart for obedience, we put in its place

much bowing and kneeling and offering—as if God could not see very deep, and would be taken by appearances (see 1 Sam. xvi. 7).

I. LIP-SERVICE IS THE REQUIREMENT OF GOD. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," saith the Lord. Hosea expresses a right feeling when he leads the people to say, "So will we render the calves of our lips" (Hos. xiv. 2). To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations to him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips in speaking *of* him and in speaking *to* him. And, if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that heart the mouth will speak. It should be carefully pointed out that the modern neglect of meetings for worship, praise, and prayer is as sad a sign of failing heart-love for God as is the exaggeration of formal rites and ceremonies. It must be plainly and forcibly urged that God calls for due *expression* of our piety; he asks for "life-service."

II. LIP-SERVICE ONLY IS AN OFFENCE UNTO GOD. Because it is worthless. God the Spirit cannot be satisfied with things; he asks for spirit, for emotion, affection, thankfulness, and trust. "Voice and nothing else" must be mockery to him who can only heed a voice when the heart speaks by means of it. We call that *false,* in relation to ourselves, which is warm expression of affection for us when there is no heart-love; and such falseness is an offence. And Isaiah tells the rulers that the secret of their falseness is that they have taken to ordering their daily conduct by "the precepts of men," and did not want to obey the Law of God; so they gave him *words* in place of *works.*—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*God the Mind-Searcher.* Foolish indeed are they who "seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord." The first reference of this warning may be to the secret schemes of the party in Jerusalem which advocated an offensive and defensive alliance with Egypt in the national emergency. Such a policy was so evidently *untheocratic* that, in the days of the good Hezekiah, they were obliged to work in the dark. It may be noticed that the Divine omniscience of all *events* and *circumstances* is a much more familiar and readily recognized truth than the Divine omniscience of all thoughts of mind and decisions of will. Yet we are to understand that, as the psalmist expresses it, "Thou understandest my thought afar off. . . . For before a word is yet on my tongue, lo! O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether." By our "thoughts" is not meant the passing set of mental associations from which we have to select, but the selections we make, the things we cherish. The omniscience of God is most searching to us when we regard it as his "knowledge of the deepest thoughts and most secret workings of the human heart."

I. THE DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AS A CHECK. A boy was required to accompany his father when out stealing potatoes from a field. The boy was set to watch while the man dug. Presently he called out, as if there was danger. "Where? where?" said the man, who could see no signs of any one approaching. "Look *up!*" replied the boy. This should always be taken into consideration in our thinking and our planning—God sees; God knows. We all need that check of the Divine eye upon us, reading our very hearts.

II. THE DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AS A TERROR. Such it must always be to the evil-doer, to the man who wants to do wrong. It checks the good man; it frightens the bad man. A servant-girl was accustomed to pilfer when dusting her master's room, but there was a portrait on the walls, the eyes of which seemed to be always following and watching her; so, to relieve herself of her terror, the foolish girl cut out the eyes. An oppressive picture of the terror of God's looking at and into evil-doers is given in the description of the judgment, when men will call on the rocks and hills to hide them from the face of God—*as if they could!*

III. THE DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AS A CONSOLATION AND STRENGTH. This it is to all who wish to be good. The best source of illustration is PS. CXXXIX. See especially the restfulness and the joy breathed in the prayer of vers. 23, 24. As Calvin says, "That man must have a rare confidence who offers himself so boldly to the scrutiny of God's righteous judgment."—R. T.

Ver. 19.—*The joy of the meek.* "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord."

It is quite usual to confuse the "meek" with the "humble;" but, though the confusion may sometimes be excused, it is better to associate distinct meanings with each term. The "humble" man is the man who thinks in a lowly way about himself. The "meek" man is the man who is concerned for the interests of *others* rather than himself. The ideal "meek" man has supreme concern for the interests of God. The "humble" man does not think of himself more highly than he ought to think. The "meek" man is really "disinterested." The Bible models of meekness are first, Moses, who sacrificed himself in his zeal for the interests of the Hebrews; and then, the Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for the redemption of mankind. In precise harmony with this text, it is said of him, "Who, for the *joy* that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." The immediate historical connection of the verse may be thus indicated: The scoffers jeered at Isaiah's assurance that the distress arising from the Assyrian invasion would pass away; there was no need to think of Egypt; Jehovah could and would defend his own. Isaiah replies to them that they need only wait awhile, and they would learn that God rules, and the day of deliverance and restoration would prove a day of increased joy for all those meek and pious souls that held fast their trust in God. The expression, "shall increase their joy," suggests two very simple and natural divisions.

I. THE MEEK HAVE THE JOY OF THEIR TRUST IN THE TIME OF PERIL. Even in the national distress they held their hope in God, and that hope was strength and cheer and song. They did not think so much about themselves and their troubles as about God and about the ways in which he would vindicate himself and make his glory known. Meek souls are taken out of themselves; and this is the secret of joy. Meek souls are so satisfied in those whom they trust that they can be quiet from fear of evil. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." They are always rich; they may always be happy.

II. THE MEEK HAVE THE JOY OF DELIVERANCE WHEN GOD'S DAY COMES. They are ready for it, expecting it, waiting to welcome it. They are not hindered by the sense of shame, as are the scoffers. Long expectation makes possession at last a keener, holier joy; and prepares them fully to enjoy all the blessings it brings. Still it is true that the meek have the best of life while they walk under its gloom, and they will have the best of heaven when its gates are opened for the ransomed.—R. T.

Vers. 20, 21.—*The humiliation of the suspicious.* We should see in these verses a strictly personal reference. Some parties, especially among the leaders of the people, could see nothing good, nothing wise, in Isaiah's teachings and warnings. They thought them babyish, untimely, leading to a false security. They valued statesmanship, political wisdom, and the subtlety of setting one great nation against another, so that *their* kingdom might be let alone. The kinds of scorning and sneering in which they indulged are described to us in ch. xxviii. 9—13. Here Isaiah utters his complaint of their suspiciousness and unreasonableness. "They make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate." There are no members of society more disagreeable to society than the suspicious, who can so keenly discern evil when there is none to discern; and find evil motive in actions of transparent sincerity. If men praise, the suspicious-tempered call it flattery. If men reprove, the suspicious-tempered say they are jaundiced. Suspiciousness comes to be a disease, a mania. It is absolutely opposed to the spirit of considerate brotherliness and heavenly Divine charity, which "thinketh no evil, and is not easily provoked." Matthew Henry, describing the people referred to here, says, "They made a man, though he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spoke to them by way of admonition, though ever so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendoes. Those who consider how apt we all are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word." As the illustration and enforcement of this subject must greatly depend on the experiences and observations of each preacher, we only give suggestive divisions.

I. THE SUSPICIOUS TEMPER MAY HAVE ITS ROOT IN NATURAL DISPOSITION.

II. THE SUSPICIOUS TEMPER SWIFTLY GROWS WITH INDULGENCE.
III. THE SUSPICIOUS TEMPER LEADS MEN TO MAKE MISTAKES.
IV. THE SUSPICIOUS TEMPER LIMITS A MAN'S ENJOYMENTS.
V. THE SUSPICIOUS TEMPER MAY MAKE IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR A MAN TO TRUST IN GOD.—R. T.

Ver. 23.—*The sanctifying power of sanctified people.* "They"—God's redeemed and sanctified ones—"shall sanctify my Name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob." This thought, in its New Testament form, may be found in the words of the great High Priestly prayer, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ, the Model of the sanctified ones, honours God, and redeems and purifies man. Two things need consideration.

I. GOD'S SANCTIFIED ONES. "Sanctify" is a familiar term to godly people. It is a word bearing several distinct meanings, or, it would be more exact to say, several distinct parts of meaning. Sometimes one of these parts is set in prominence, and sometimes another part; and it is always worth while to use religious terms with care, precisely apprehending the senses in which they are employed. "Sanctify" may mean "make actually pure and holy." This is indeed the more common and usual meaning of the term, which comes at once to our minds. We think that for us to be sanctified must be for us to be made "perfectly holy." The word seems to express our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in the light." When we are wholly sanctified we shall be ready for presenting faultless before the presence of God. Some of us think that such "holiness" may be attained in this life; while others of us feel that the testing death-time must come ere the sanctification can be complete, and the full bloom can rest on the sacred fruitage of our life. But by putting this side of meaning into undue prominence, we lose sight of other ideas which lie in the word—ideas of even more practical importance to us. The Jews had thoughts about this word "sanctify" which brought it more helpfully within the sphere of their actual life and labour. To them to sanctify a thing was to take it away—to separate it from common uses, and devote it wholly, consecrate it, to Divine and holy uses. A person or a thing was sanctified when it was given over wholly to God and God's service. A lamb separated from the flock for sacrifice was said to be sanctified. Samuel, taken by his mother away from the home-life, and left with Eli at the tabernacle, was sanctified—lent to the Lord, given over wholly to the Lord's service, for so long as he might live. The Levites were a sanctified tribe, because they were taken from the other tribes, and devoted wholly to the tabernacle service. The Jewish idea of the word comes out very fully in the ceremony of the consecration of a Levite. The priest touched with the blood of a sacrificed animal the Levite's right hand, right eye, and right foot. This was the Levite's sanctification. It devoted every faculty and every power—of seeing, hearing, doing, walking, the right-hand faculties, the best and the choicest—to God's peculiar service. He was a man set apart. This is the side of sanctifying which we may realize, and in this sense our Lord could declare, "I am," daily, continuously, "sanctifying myself." We, too, must be "sanctifying ourselves" for the bearing and the doing of God's holy will and service. And "sanctifying self" means (1) the full and hearty devotion of all our powers to God's work; (2) the patient and anxious culturing of the inner life; (3) hearty and entire separation from all self-seeking interests. Of Christ's school it may be said,

> "Here we learn to serve and give,
> And, rejoicing, self deny."

II. THE SANCTIFYING POWER OF THE SANCTIFIED ONES. This is the only real fitness of a man for doing God's work in the world. It ensures the highest and best power for the doing, because it brings all the force of the man himself to bear upon his work. It is not a man's knowledge blessing his fellow-men, nor a man's experience, nor a man's genius, nor a man's efforts; it is a *man* blessing men. It is a regenerate, divinely endowed man, blessing men. It is a Christly man continuing Christ's work of grace. It is a man who has seen Christ telling his vision to others. It is the man become a saint, and therefore an apostle. "That self-sanctifying of the Lord Jesus Christ was 'for our sakes,' and it has power on us. It is the inspiration of an

example. It is more than the realization of our ideal. *There* is the noblest, the loftiest manhood; there is the truest, the meekest piety; there is the perfection of human sonship;—there, in that sanctified Man, who kneels before God and says, 'For thy sake, O Father, I am sanctifying myself. For their sakes, O Father, I am sanctifying myself.'" And there we learn that most blessed lesson that "sanctity is power"—power to honour the Divine Name, power to redeem and uplift our fellow-men.—R. T.

EXPOSITION

CHAPTER XXX.

Vers. 1—7.—THE ALLIANCE WITH EGYPT OPENLY REBUKED. In the preceding chapter (ver. 15) the design of the Jewish rulers to seek the alliance of Egypt was covertly glanced at and condemned; now it is openly declared and rebuked. The rulers are warned that no good can possibly come of it, even in a worldly sense. The Egyptians will give no aid, or at any rate no effectual aid. The sums expended in purchasing their friendship will be utterly thrown away.

Ver. 1.—**Woe to the rebellious children** (comp. ch. i. 23; lxv. 2). The word translated "rebellious" is used in Deut. xxi. 18, 20 of the persistently disobedient son, who was to be brought before the elders and stoned to death. **That take counsel**; rather, *that form plans*, such as the plan now formed to call in the aid of Egypt. It must be borne in mind that, under the theocracy, there was an authorized mode of consulting God, and receiving an answer from him, in any political emergency. **That cover with a covering.** The exact metaphor employed is uncertain. Mr. Cheyne renders, "that weave a web;" Dr. Kay, "that pour out a molten image." The meaning, however, in any case is, "that carry out a design," the clause being a mere variant of the preceding one. **That they may add sin to sin**; *i.e.* "to add a fresh sin to all their former sins."

Ver. 2.—**That walk**; or, *are on their way* (comp. ch. xxxi. 1). Either the Jewish ambassadors have already started, or the anticipatory vision of the prophet sees them as if starting. In the history (2 Kings xviii. 13—37; ch. xxxvi. 1—22) it is not expressly said that Hezekiah made application to Egypt for aid; but the reproaches of Rabshakeh (2 Kings xviii. 21, 24) would be pointless if he had not done so. **Have not asked at my mouth.** As they ought to have done (see Numb. xxvii. 21; Judg. i. 1; xx. 18; 1 Sam. xxiii. 2; 1 Kings xxii. 7, etc.). **To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh.** It is very uncertain who is the "Pharaoh" here intended. The supreme power over Egypt was probably, at the time, in the hands of Tirkakah (2 Kings xix. 9); but Lower Egypt seems to have been ruled by various princes, the chief of whom was Shabatok, and any one of these may have been regarded by Isaiah as a "Pharaoh." **To trust in the shadow of Egypt.** Trust in the "shadow of God" was an expression very familiar to the Jews (see Ps. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lxiii. 7; xci. 1; ch. xxv. 4; xxxii. 2). To "trust in the shadow of Egypt" was to put Egypt in the place of God.

Ver. 4. — **His princes were at Zoan.** "Zoan" is undoubtedly Tanis, which is now "San," a heap of ruins in the Delta, where some interesting remains of the shepherd-kings have been discovered. It was a favourite capital of the monarchs of the nineteenth dynasty, and seems to have been the scene of the struggle between Moses and the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Ps. lxxviii. 12, 43). It then declined, but is said to have been the birthplace of the first king of the twenty-first dynasty. In the Ethiopian period it rose once more to some importance, and was at one time the capital of a principality (see G. Smith's 'Asshur-bani-pal,' pp. 21, 26, 32). The "princes" here spoken of are probably Hezekiah's ambassadors. **His ambassadors came to Hanes.** "Hanes" has been generally identified with the modern Esnes, a village between Memphis and Thebes, which is thought to mark the site of Heracleopolis Magna. But it has been well remarked that the Jewish envoys would scarcely have proceeded so far. Mr. R. S. Poole suggests, instead of Esnes, Tahpenes, or Daphnæ ('Dict. of the Bible,' vol. i. p. 753); but that name is somewhat remote from Hanes. Perhaps it would be best to acknowledge that "Hanes" cannot at present be identified. It was probably not very far from Tanis.

Ver. 5.—**They were all ashamed**; rather, *all are ashamed*. The reference is not to the ambassadors, who felt no shame in their embassy, and probably returned elated by the promises made them; but to the subsequent feelings of the Jewish nation, when it was discovered by sad experience that no reliance was to be placed on "the strength of Pharaoh." **A people that could not profit**

them. Mr. Cheyne compares, very pertinently, an inscription of Sargon's, where he says of the people of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab, that "they and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, unto Pharaoh, King of Egypt, *a monarch who could not save them*, their presents carried, and besought his alliance" (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 130, ll. 35—39). Egypt was, in fact, quite unable to cope with Assyria, and knew it. **A shame, and also a reproach.** A matter of which they would themselves be "ashamed," and with which the Assyrians would "reproach" them (as they did, 2 Kings xviii. 21, 24).

Ver. 6.—**Burden of the beasts of the south.** Delitzsch thinks that the Egyptians are intended by the "beasts of the south"—the expression pointing primarily to the hippopotamus, which was an apt emblem of the slow-moving Egyptians. But most commentators regard the "beasts" of this clause as equivalent to the "young asses and camels" mentioned towards the end of the verse. (On the sense of the word "burden," see the introductory paragraph to ch. xiii.) **Into the land of trouble and anguish**; rather, *through a land*. It is not Egypt that is spoken of, but the desert between Judæa and Egypt. The reminiscences of this desert were such that the Israelites always exaggerated its terrors and dangers (see Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6). **From whence come the young and old lion**; rather, *the lioness and the lion* (see 'Speaker's Commentary' on Gen. xlix. 9; vol. i. p. 227). Lions can never have been numerous in the tract in question; but they may have haunted portions of it, when it was better watered than at present. **The viper and fiery flying serpent.** Snakes of various kinds have always been abundant in the desert between Judæa and Egypt (Numb. xxi. 6; Strab., xvi. p. 759; Schubert, 'Travels,' vol. ii. p. 406; Burckhardt, 'Travels,' p. 499, etc.). Some of them were believed anciently to have wings (Herod., ii. 75; iii. 107); but the fact is doubted. Isaiah is not concerned with natural history, but with definitely marking out the locality through which the ambassadors would march. For this purpose it was best to describe it in terms drawn from the popular belief. **Their riches . . . their treasures.** Ambassadors who came to request military aid, as a matter of course carried rich presents with them. **Young asses . . . camels.** The ordinary beasts of burden employed in the passage of the desert (Gen. xxxvii. 25; xlii. 26; Herod., iii. 9, etc.).

Ver. 7.—**Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.** No modern critic accepts this interpretation. Most translate, "Wherefore I name it" (*i.e.* Egypt) "Rahab, that sits still;" or "Arrogance, that sits still." Rahab, "pride" or "arrogance," would seem to have been an old name for Egypt (Job xxvi. 12; Ps. lxxxvii. 4; lxxxix. 10; ch. li. 9), not one given at this time by Isaiah. What he means to say is, "Proud as thou art, thou doest nothing to maintain thy pride, but art content with sitting still" This he "cries" or "proclaims" concerning Egypt, as the most important thing for other nations to know about her.

Vers. 8—17.—A RENEWAL OF THREATENING. The denunciation of the Egyptian alliance had been made *vivâ voce*, in the courts of the temple or in some other place of public resort. As he ended, Isaiah received a Divine intimation that the prophecy was to be put on record, doubly, upon a tablet and in a book. At the same time, the "rebelliousness" of the people was further pointed out, and fresh threats (vers. 13, 14, and 17) were uttered against them.

Ver. 8.—**Write it before them in a tablet**; *i.e.* "write the prophecy before them" (equivalent to "to be set up before them") "on a tablet," in the briefest possible form (comp. ch. viii. 1). **And note it in a book**; *i.e.* "and also make a full notation of it in a book," or parchment roll. The "tablet" was to be for the admonition of the living generation of men; the "book" was for future generations, to be a record of God's omniscience and faithfulness "for ever and ever." **That it may be for the time to come**; rather, *for an after-day*—not for the immediate present only. **For ever and ever.** Modern critics observe that the phrase, *lâ'ad 'ad 'olâm*, never occurs elsewhere, and suggest a change of the pointing, which would give the sense of "for a testimony for ever." Whether we accept the change or not, the meaning undoubtedly is that consigning the prophecy to a "book" would make an appeal to it possible *in perpetuum*. The perpetuity of the written Word is assumed as certain.

Ver. 9.—**That this is a rebellious people**; rather, *for this is a rebellious people*. The words to be written were those of the preceding prophecy. The reason for their being written is now given (comp. Deut. xxxi. 26, 27). **Lying children** (comp. ch. lix. 13). They professed devotion to God; but their acts contradicted their words.

Ver. 10.—**Which say, etc.** Not, of course, directly, in so many words. But indirectly they let it be understood that this was what they wished. Compare the advice given to Micaiah by Ahab's messenger, who, no doubt, correctly interpreted the wishes of the monarch and his nobles (1

Kings xxii. 13). **Seers . . . prophets.** Not two classes of persons, but two names for the same class. The "parallelism" of Hebrew poetry leads to the constant employment of synonymous clauses. **Right things**; *i.e.* the truth in all its plainness. **Smooth things**; *i.e.* soft, pleasant announcements. **Deceits**; or, *illusions* (comp. Jer. ix. 5, "They will deceive" or "mock"—where we have the same root).

Ver. 11.—**Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.** "The Holy One of Israel" was one of Isaiah's most frequent names for the Almighty. He used it especially when rebuking Israel's unholiness (ch. i. 4; v. 24, etc.). The irreligious Jews were weary of this constant iteration, and wished to hear no more concerning this "Holy One," whose very holiness was a reproach to them.

Ver. 12.—**Because ye despise this word**; rather, *because ye reject this word* (see 1 Sam. viii. 7; xv. 23, 26; 2 Kings xvii. 15, etc.). The "word" intended is probably the prophecy against trusting in Egypt (vers. 1—7). **And trust in oppression**; or, *extortion.* Oppressive measures employed to obtain the rich gifts which had to be sent into Egypt (ver. 6) are probably intended (comp. 2 Kings xv. 20). Grätz and Cheyne change the reading from *'oshek* to *'ikkêsh* ("perverseness"); but without any necessity. **And perverseness**; literally, *crookedness*; i.e. "tortuous policy" (Kay). **And stay thereon**; rather, *lean* or *stay yourselves thereon.*

Ver. 13.—This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall. Your sin in rebelling against God, rejecting the warnings of his prophets, and trusting in your own devices shall bring you into the condition of a wall in which there is a "breach," or rather, a "bulge," which therefore totters to its fall, and is liable to dissolve in ruins at any moment. **Swelling out in a high wall.** The higher the wall, the greater the danger, and the more complete the destruction.

Ver. 14.—**And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces.** Isaiah is fond of mixed metaphors, and of superseding one metaphor by another. From comparing Judah's fall and ruin to the shattering of a lofty wall, he suddenly turns to a comparison of it with the breaking to pieces of an earthen pitcher. Judah shall be so broken as when the pitcher is crushed into minute fragments, so that there is no piece large enough to convey a coal from one fire for the lighting of another, or to be of even the least use for drawing water from a well. A complete dissolution of the political fabric is foreshadowed, such as did not actually take effect till the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 15.—**For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel.** As the irreligious party wished to hear no more of "the Holy One of Israel" (ver. 11), Isaiah takes care to keep him constantly before their minds (comp. ch. xxxi. 1). **In returning and rest shall ye be saved**; rather, *should ye be saved*, or *might ye be saved.* The conditions are put forward, not as now capable of being realized, but as those which might have been realized at an earlier date. The "returning" spoken of is an abandonment of the course hitherto pursued, which was reckless provocation of Assyria and trust in Egypt. The "rest" is staying upon God—renunciation of trust on any arm of flesh, and simple reliance on the Divine aid, as sure to be sufficient when the need came. **In quietness and confidence shall be your strength**; rather, *should be.* The clause is a mere iteration in other words of the preceding one. **Ye would not.** They had practically rejected the policy of quiescence and patient waiting upon God, when they sent the embassy into Egypt.

Ver. 16.—**Ye said, No**; for we will flee upon horses; rather, *we will fly upon horses.* The nobles had perhaps a manly eagerness to mount the Egyptian war-horses, and rush upon the enemy at full speed, in the hope of discomfiting them. Isaiah warns them that they will not really *fly on* the enemy, but *flee before* him. **We will ride upon the swift.** "The swift" (*kal*) seems to be a mere variant for "horse," the parallelism being, as so frequently, "synonymous." **Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.** However swift the horses of the Judæans, their enemies would be as well mounted and would pursue and overtake them.

Ver. 17.—**One thousand** shall flee **at the rebuke of one.** A hyperbole common in Scripture (Deut. xxxii. 30; Josh. xxiii. 10; Lev. xxvi. 8), and not confined to the sacred writers. Piankhi the Ethiopian boasts, in his great inscription, that, with Ammon's help, "many should turn their backs upon a few, and one should rout a thousand" ('Records of the Past,' vol. ii. p. 84). **At the rebuke of five.** The "rebuke" of five (*i.e.* their war-shout) would put to flight the whole army. **As a beacon**; rather, *as a flag-staff*—stripped and bare (comp. ch. xxxiii. 23; Ezek. xxvii. 5). A tree stripped of its branches and left standing as a landmark seems to be intended. **As an ensign.** A military standard, such as was in common use among the Assyrians and Egyptians, as among the Greeks and Romans (see 'Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 57; Rawlinson, 'Hist. of Egypt,' vol. i. p. 463)

VERS. 18—26.—A RENEWAL OF PROMISE. The denunciations of the preceding passage (vers. 9—17) had been so terrible that, without some counterpoise of promise, they must have produced a general despair. This was not the Divine purpose. Judah's probation still continued. Therefore it was necessary to let it be seen that the Divine long-suffering was not yet exhausted—there were still conditions under which God would be gracious to his people. The conditions were "crying to the Lord" (ver. 19), and entire abolition of idolatry (ver. 22).

Ver. 18.—**And therefore.** "Because your sins require this chastisement" (Kay); "Because of the extremity of your need" (Cheyne). It is, perhaps, best to own that the motives of the Divine action are very commonly obscure; and, if seen clearly by the prophets, are certainly not clearly set forth, being (it may be) inscrutable. While the motive, however, is obscure, the promise is plain and unmistakable. **The Lord will wait, that he may be gracious unto you.** God is not about at present to "make a full end;" he is bent on "waiting"—his intent is "to be gracious." **He will be exalted, that he may have mercy.** He will find some means of vindicating his honour and exalting himself, short of your destruction, in order that it may be open to him to give you a further chance of repentance, whereby you would obtain mercy. **For the Lord is a God of judgment.** God is essentially just; sin *must* receive punishment; but the punishment may be short of destruction. Justice does not exclude mercy. If men bear their punishment with patience, and **wait for** God, a brighter day will dawn on them in course of time.

Ver. 19.—**For the people shall dwell in Zion**; rather, *a people shall continue.* Jerusalem shall not now be made desolate, or deprived of its inhabitants. Whatever the number of captives taken, "a people shall remain." **Thou shalt weep no more.** The reasons for weeping shall be removed. **He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.** For God to be gracious to them, they must first "cry" to him—make an earnest, hearty appeal to him for mercy. Their "cry" will be answered as soon as heard, *i.e.* as soon as uttered.

Ver. 20.—**And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity** (so Mr. Cheyne). But most modern critics (Kay, Delitzsch, Vance Smith, etc.) regard the words as a promise of support through the siege, and omit the interpolated "though." Translate, *And the Lord will give you bread of adversity, and water of affliction*; i.e. scant rations, but sufficient; *and thy teachers shall not*, etc. **Be removed into a corner**; *i.e.* "have to hide themselves from persecution." A persecution of Jehovah's prophets had commenced in Judah during the reign of Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 19—22), and had probably continued with more or less severity ever since.

Ver. 21.—**Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee.** Kay says, "The teacher will go *before* his flock, marking out the way before them." But in that case, the flock would hear the word *before* them. Delitzsch explains better, "They (the teachers), as the shepherds of the flock, would *follow* the people with friendly words of admonition." Even in the East, shepherds sometimes follow their flocks (see Gen. xxxii. 17). **When ye turn**, *i.e.* when ye are about to turn.

Ver. 22.—**Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver.** Idolatry, greatly encouraged by Ahaz, had been strictly forbidden by Hezekiah at the beginning of his reign (2 Kings xviii. 4); but the present passage, among others, shows how impossible it was for a king, with the best intentions, to effect the extirpation of idolatry, if his subjects were attached to it. Evidently the Jews had, in many cases, secretly maintained their idols and their idolatrous practices, despite the efforts of Hezekiah. But now, in their repentance, they would "defile" (*i.e.* destroy) both the outer "covering" of precious metal, and the inner core of wood or stone, or base metallic substance. **The ornament of thy molten images of gold**; rather, *the coating* or *overlaying.* It was usual to overlay with gold or silver molten images of bronze or other inferior metal. **Cast them away**; literally, *scatter*; i.e. either grind them to powder (2 Kings xxiii. 6), or at any rate break them to bits, and then disperse the fragments far and wide.

Ver. 23.—**Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal**; rather, *then shall he give rain for thy seed, wherewith thou sowest the ground.* God, having forgiven his people, will once more renew the blessings of his ordinary providence, giving them "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). **Bread of the increase of the earth**; rather, *bread, the produce of the ground*; i.e. ordinary bread, not "bread from heaven," like the manna in the wilderness. **Fat and plenteous**; literally, *rich and fat.* **Thy cattle.** To complete the general prosperity, there should be plentiful pasture for the flocks and herds.

Ver. 24.—**The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground**; rather, *that till* or *cultivate the ground.* The Hebrew word is generic, and does not apply to "earing"

(*i.e.* ploughing) only. **Shall eat clean provender.** Delitzsch says that *b'lil khamitz* is "a mash, composed of oats, barley, and vetches, made more savoury with salt and sour vegetables." Mr. Cheyne translates, "Shall eat mixed provender with salt." The general idea is clearly that they shall have for their ordinary food that superior kind of provender which, according to existing practices, was reserved for rare occasions. **Winnowed with the shovel.** Anciently, winnowing was chiefly effected by tossing the grain into the air with shovels in a draughty place (see Wilkinson, 'Ancient Egyptians,' vol. iv. pp. 86, 89, 90). **The fan** was scarcely in use so early as Isaiah's time. He means by *mizrch* probably a second instrument for tossing the grain. Delitzsch translates, "winnowing-*fork*."

Ver. 25.—**Rivers and streams of water**; rather, *rivulets, courses of water*. Channels, along which water was conveyed for the purpose of irrigation, are intended (comp. Ezek. xlvii. 1—12; Joel iii. 18). No doubt there is a secondary allegorical meaning running through the whole description of Judah's prosperity (vers. 23—26). In this allegorical intention the waters stand for the streams of God's grace. **In the day of the great slaughter.** Equivalent to "the day of vengeance" (ch. xxxiv. 8)—the day when God shall tread down his enemies. The prophet passes from the immediate effect of Judah's repentance to a broader view of what shall happen when God's kingdom is established upon the earth. **When the towers fall**; *i.e.* when there shall be a general "pulling down of strong holds," and a "casting down of every high thing that exalts itself against God" (2 Cor. x. 4, 5).

Ver. 26.—**The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun.** "The promise now rises higher and higher, and passes from earth to heaven" (Delitzsch). All nature will become more glorious in the "last times." Moonlight will be as sunlight, and sunlight will be seven times brighter than it is now. Again, there may be an under allegorical sense. The light of truth will shine with greater brilliancy, so that all men will be enlightened by it. "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea" (ch. xi. 9). **As the light of seven days**; *i.e.* as though the light of seven days were concentrated into one. **In the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach.** At that period in the world's history when God forgives the iniquities of his people, and condescends to reign over them as their actual King, either in this present world or in "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. xxi. 1; comp. ch. lxvi. 22), wherein shall "dwell righteousness" (2 Pet. iii. 13). **And healeth the stroke of their wound**; rather, *the wound of his stroke;* i.e. the wound caused by the stroke wherewith he has smitten them.

Vers. 27—33.—A PROPHECY OF ASSYRIA'S DESTRUCTION. Mr. Cheyne regards this passage as "a symbolic description of *the judgment* introduced by a theophany." But is it not rather a poetical description of God's judgment on Assyria, which may be, probably is, a type of his final judgment upon an iniquitous world? The mention of Assyria in ver. 31 seems to be decisive in favour of the prophecy being (primarily) of special application to the circumstances of the time.

Ver. 27.—**The Name of the Lord cometh from far.** "The Name of Jehovah" is scarcely distinguishable from Jehovah himself. Jehovah, who has long hid himself, and seemed to keep himself remote from worldly affairs, now is about to manifest his glory, and interpose in the doings of men in a wonderful way. **Burning with his anger**; rather, *his anger burneth* (comp. ch. xlii. 25). **And the burden thereof is heavy**; "and heavy is its grievousness." **His tongue as a devouring fire** (comp. Exod. xxiv. 17; Deut. ix. 3; ch. ix. 19; x. 17; xxix. 6; xxxiii. 14).

Ver. 28.—**His breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck.** When the sacred writers are oppressed by the tremendous character of the revelations made to them, their metaphors are often laboured and incongruous. Here, the mouth, in which there is a tongue of fire, sends forth a rush of breath, which is compared to an "overflowing stream, which reaches to the middle of the neck," and sweeps those who try to cross it away (comp. Ezek. xlvii. 5). **To sift the nations with the sieve of vanity.** More incongruity, to be excused by the writer's theme being such as to transcend all language and all imagery. One of the Divine purposes, in all violent crashes and revolutions, is "to sift nations"—to separate in each nation the good from the bad, the precious from the vile; and this is done with "the sieve of vanity," *i.e.* the sieve which allows the good corn to pass through, separating from it, and keeping back, all that is vile and refuse (comp. Amos ix. 9). **There shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err.** Another entire change in the metaphor. The result of God's interference shall be "to put a bridle in the jaws of the *peoples*," whereby the hand of the Almighty will guide them to their destruction.

Ver. 29.—**Ye shall have a song**; literally, *to you will* [*then*] *be a song*. While the

nations weep and lament, and are burnt up by God's anger, and swept away by his "overflowing flood," and guided to their destruction by his bridle in their jaws, Israel shall rejoice with singing. **As in the night** when a holy solemnity is kept. Perhaps a special reference is intended to the Passover-feast, which commenced with an evening or night celebration (Exod. xii. 6, 8, 42; Matt. xxvi. 30). Or perhaps "Isaiah is not referring to one feast more than another" (Cheyne), night-rituals belonging to all feasts, since the day commenced with the sunset. The Passover-song consisted of Ps. cxiii.—cxviii. **And as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord.** Joyful processions from the country districts to Jerusalem are alluded to. These were commonly headed by a piper or a band of pipers (Vitringa). They took place several times in the year—at each of the three great feasts, and irregularly when any district sent up its firstfruits to the temple treasury (Neh. x. 35—37). **To the Mighty One of Israel**; literally, *to the Rock of Israel*; i.e. to Jehovah (comp. ch. xvii. 10; and see also Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31; Ps. xviii. 2, 31, 46, etc.). The idea embodied in the metaphor is rather that of an unfailing refuge than of mere might and power.

Ver. 30.—**The Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard**; literally, *the majesty of his voice.* Mr. Cheyne renders, "the *peal* of his voice." Delitzsch understands fearful thundering, like that at Sinai (Exod. xix. 16; xx. 18), to be intended (comp. Ps. xxix. 3—9). **The lighting down of his arm**; *i.e.* the blow causing the destruction, of ver. 31, of whatever kind that destruction might be—blasting by lightning, plague, simoom, death by the visitation of God, as men slept, or any other sudden, sweeping catastrophe. **With the indignation of his anger**; rather, *in fury of anger.* With **the flame of a devouring fire**; rather, *with a flame of devouring fire.* All the elements of storm are accumulated by the prophet, to express the terrible character of the coming judgment—lightning, and scattering (of crops?), tempestuous wind, and hail-stones.

Ver. 31.—**For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down**; rather, *for at the voice of the Lord shall Assyria be dismayed* (compare the first clause of ver. 30). Which **smote with a rod**; rather, *with the rod will he* (i.e. Jehovah) *smite.*

Ver. 32.—In **every place where the grounded staff shall pass**, etc.; rather, *and it shall come to pass that every stroke* (literally, *passage*) *of the destined rod which Jehovah causes to rest upon him shall be with an accompaniment of drums and citherns.* Each blow dealt to Assyria shall rejoice her enemies, and cause them to break out into songs of praise, accompanied by the music of various instruments (comp. ver. 29; and see also Exod. xv. 1—21). **In battles of shaking**; or, *battles of swinging*—"those in which Jehovah swings his rod, and deals (repeated) blows to his enemies" (Cheyne). **Will he fight with it**; rather, *will he fight against her*; i.e. against Assyria.

Ver. 33.—**For Tophet is ordained of old**; rather, *for a Tophet has been long since prepared.* A "Tophet" is a place of burning, probably derived from the Aryan root *tap* or *taph*, found in Greek τάφος, τέφρα, Latin *tep*-idus, Sanskrit *tap*, Persian *tâphtan.* The name was specially attached to a particular spot in the Valley of Hinnom, where sacrifices were offered to Moloch (2 Kings xxiii. 10; Jer. vii. 31; xix. 6, 11, etc.); but Isaiah seems to use it generically, as if there were many Tophets. **For the king it is prepared**; literally, *it also is prepared for the king*—in the Hebrew "for the *melech*," which is the same word as "Moloch," who was looked upon by his worshippers as "the king." κατ' ἐξοχήν. Isaiah means to say, "As the Tophet of the Vale of Hinnom is prepared for a king (Moloch), so this new Tophet is prepared for another king (the King of Assyria)." **He hath made it deep and large**—a vast burning-place for a vast multitude (2 Kings xix. 35), with the fire and the wood ready, only awaiting the breath of Jehovah to kindle it. As the bodies of great malefactors were burnt (Josh. vii. 25), and not buried, so the prophet consigns to a great burning the hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian corpses, of which it would soon be necessary to dispose in some way.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—7.—*A godless policy issues in disaster, however seemingly wise.* In the sight of man there was no more prudent course for the Jews to take than to ally themselves with Egypt. Egypt was the only power in their neighbourhood that could possibly make head against Assyria. Egypt had a standing army, trained warriors, an ancient military system, numerous chariots and horses, ample siege material, and abundant appliances of war. She was at the time closely connected with Ethiopia, and could bring into the field the forces of two great nations. Had she been thoroughly awake to her own interests, she would have strained every nerve to make an effective

league of the small nations and tribes lying between her and Assyria Proper, in order to check the advance of that ambitious and dangerous power. Hezekiah and his advisers might naturally see in Egypt, not only their only possible protector, but one to whose protection they might look with confidence and hope. There was one thing only to be set against all this. The Egyptians were a nation of idolaters, and God had expressly warned the Jews, by the mouth of Isaiah, against relying on them (ch. xx. 2—6). Thus reliance on Egypt was a godless policy—involved taking up a position of hostility to God; ceasing to ask his counsel (ver. 1), turning a deaf ear to any warnings that might be addressed to them by God's prophets (ch. xxix. 10—14). And God made it of none effect. God blinded Tirhakah to his true interests, and made him act in the most foolish way possible—first encourage Hezekiah to revolt, and then desert him in the hour of need and peril. Some such result follows always on the adoption of a godless policy. The expectations of those who engage in it are disappointed; there is a failure somewhere: "God arises, and his enemies are scattered;" their clever schemes break down and come to nought.

Ver. 8.—*The written Word endures for ever.* There is always a permanency about written, that does not belong to uttered, speech. "Litera scripta *manet*," said one Roman poet; "Exegi monumentum *ære perennius*," said another, when he had completed a book of his odes. It was to secure continuance to human utterances that the act of writing was invented at the first; and it was probably long employed for no other purpose. The permanency, however, that attaches to ordinary writings is a limited permanency. They are not intended to "endure for ever." For the most part they are on a frail and perishable material, which cannot be expected to last a century, and there is no expectation of their being copied and so prolonged in existence. But it is otherwise with the Divine Word. The Divine Word is enshrined in writing, that it may continue as long as the world continues. It is too precious to be lost. When the material on which it is written shows signs of decay, there always have been, and there always will be, pious persons, who will take care that the words are reproduced exactly on some fresh material, and so handed on unchanged. Since the invention of printing, it has become practically impossible that any work held in esteem by any considerable number of persons should perish. The written Word could only pass away by all interest in it being lost among all sections of human-kind. Against such a miserable result the promise of God to be with his Church "always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), furnishes an absolute security. Hence we may be sure that "the Word of the Lord will endure for ever" (1 Pet. i. 25).

Vers. 10, 11.—*Smooth things more acceptable to man than the truth.* In connection with this subject there would seem to be three things to be specially set forth.

I. THE FACT OF THE PREFERENCE. Man has no natural aversion to truth as truth. On the contrary, truth is congenial to his nature and acceptable to his intellect. Scientific truth, historic truth, is readily received when offered to him, and, if not very eagerly desired or very carefully sought out, is at any rate, when put before him, generally to some extent appreciated. The truth that is disliked is moral truth. Even when set before him in an abstract form, moral teaching frets him, vexes him; and moralists have been always unpopular from the days of Socrates to those of Samuel Johnson. Especially disliked are the teachers who do not stop at abstract morality, but point their moral teaching by applying it to the life and conduct of those to whom they address themselves. On the other hand, there is no surer way of pleasing men than by flattering them, provided it is done skilfully and with a delicate hand. We like to have our conduct praised, our characters admired, our example held up as a model to be imitated. We detest being found fault with, criticized, told that we have done wrong. We do not perhaps *ask* men to "prophesy unto us smooth things," but we make it very plain to all with whom we come into contact that "smooth things" alone are agreeable to us.

II. THE GROUND OF THE PREFERENCE. Moral truth is disliked because it is felt as a reproach. We are conscious to ourselves of our own moral imperfection; and every exhibition of a high moral standard, every inculcation of high moral principles, seems to us a reflection on our own shortcomings, not far short of actual personal censure.

The smooth voice of flattery pleases us, partly, through its contrast with the rough tones of the unwelcome moralist, but further through its persuading us that we really have some of the good qualities which the flatterer imputes, and thus calling into play our self-respect and self-esteem. Moral warnings awaken fear for the future; flattery awakens hope. Moral warnings disturb; flattery soothes. Even when we perceive that the flatterer is cozening us, we let ourselves be cozened; our vanity is pleased at being tickled, and asks for nothing but a prolongation of the pleasurable excitement.

III. THE ILL RESULTS THAT FLOW FROM THE PREFERENCE. Character, which would naturally improve under the bracing discipline of a stern and strict inculcation of moral truth, continually deteriorates, if flattery takes the place of honest plain-speaking. Men believe themselves better than they are, and take less pains to become better. They grow vain and self-satisfied, thinking themselves in need of nothing, when truly they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17). Spiritual teachers should beware of encouraging men's self-indulgent desire for spiritual ease; and, while careful not to "quench the smoking flax," or "break the bruised reed," should constantly sound in the ears of all denunciations of vice, warnings, rebukes, admonishments. In no other way can they be either faithful to their calling or truly serviceable to their fellow-men.

Vers. 19—22.—*Turning to God.* It is the intention of God's chastisements, and their natural, though perhaps scarcely their ordinary, result, to stir the soul to penitence, and produce a turning of the heart to God. When the spirit of the man is truly touched, the steps on the path of repentance are commonly—

I. THE UTTERANCE OF A CRY. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts ii. 37). "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30). "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6). "Lord, save us, we perish!" (Matt. viii. 25). Some bitter cry or other is wrung from the lips of the awakened sinner, who feels his own weakness and guilt, despairs of saving himself, and makes appeal to him who is alone "mighty to save," in tones of earnest entreaty and extreme longing for help. The "cry" is answered as soon as heard (ver. 19). By external teaching, or an inward secret voice, men are warned what they must do as the next step on the path which leads to life. This is—

II. THE FORSAKING OF THEIR SINS. Be it impurity, be it lying, be it idolatry, that has separated between the sinner and God, he must at once set himself to cast it off, and rid himself of it. "Ye shall defile the covering of thy graven images" (ver. 22). "Put away the evil *of* your doings: cease to do evil" (ch. i. 16). It is sin, and sin only, that separates us from God. If we would be at one with him, sin must be put away. All, however, is not completed yet. Those who truly turn to God will not be content with a negative goodness; they will follow up the forsaking of their sins by—

III. THE EARNEST ENDEAVOUR TO LEAD A LIFE OF ACTIVE WELL-DOING. "Cease to do evil; learn to do well," says the prophet (ch. i. 16). It is not enough to "put off the old man;" we must "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). For every weed that we pluck from our hearts, we must put in a flower; for every vice that we uproot, we must plant a virtue. God wills that we should "add to our faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Pet. i. 5—7). We must endeavour, by "patient continuance in well-doing," at once to improve our own characters, to help the brethren, and to rebuke, if we cannot convince, the gainsayer.

Vers. 23—26.—*The glories of Christ's kingdom shown in figure.* Isaiah gives us several descriptions of Christ's kingdom, all of them more or less allegorical (see ch. iv. 2—6; xi. 1—9; xxxv. 1—10; lx. 1—22). In the present description *all* is allegory. The blessings of the kingdom are—

I. RICH AND ABUNDANT HARVESTS, by which would seem to be signified a great conversion of the nations by the preaching of the gospel (comp. Matt. ix. 37, 38; John iv. 35), together with the display of a great zeal to do abundant good works (Matt. vii. 16—20).

II. FREQUENT RAIN; *i.e.* an abundant shedding upon the earth of the dew of God's blessing; a continued pouring down from him of refreshing, invigorating, healthful, life-giving influences. By these the rich harvests would be produced, the pastures made luxuriant, and God's creatures upon the earth, both men and animals, rendered happy.

III. CONDUITS EVERYWHERE, TO CONVEY THE LIFE-GIVING FLUID FAR AND WIDE. These appear to represent appointed means of grace—artificially constructed channels whereby the heavenly influences are ordinarily communicated to the faithful. They flow everywhere, not only in the valleys and plains, but also upon the mountains and high hills—the remotest and most inaccessible parts of the kingdom.

IV. FLOODS OF LIGHT EVERYWHERE AND AT ALL TIMES; *i.e.* general illumination and enlightenment—the spread of spiritual knowledge and true wisdom through all parts of the Church and all ranks of Christians; the disappearance of spiritual darkness, of ignorance, folly, and blinded consciences. This appears to be mentioned as the crowning glory of all, beyond which description cannot go, and with which therefore the allegorical sketch comes to an end.

Vers. 29, 32.—*The punishments of nations for deliverance, rather than for vengeance.* God "hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth" (Ezek. xviii. 32). His justice compels him to punish the wicked, and sometimes requires the destruction even of a nation; but the main object of the Almighty in all such destructions is not to take vengeance on the oppressor, but to deliver the oppressed. Assyria, and the nations leagued with her, had now by their wickedness, their pride, their blasphemy, their cruelty, their idolatry, their impurity, provoked him, as scarcely ever had he been provoked before. He was about to inflict a signal punishment, the fame of which would spread far and wide. But it was not on the punishment itself, or on the sufferings of those affected by it, that his own eye was fixed. It was on the consequences which would follow to his own people. They would "have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept;" they would have "gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord." The result to them would be the removal of a constant and terrible fear; a feeling of satisfaction and safety; a sense of relief which would for a time be jubilant, and show itself in music and song, perhaps in shouting and dancing. The punishment of the Assyrians would be to them deliverance —a deliverance which, it might be hoped, would convert the heart of the nation to God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*The embassy to Egypt.* The embassy to Egypt has been sent, and the prophet's object is to show that the policy of it is false, as all policy must be false which does not rest upon religion.

I. THE POLICY CHARACTERIZED. It is that of "unruly sons," and they "carry out a purpose which is not from Jehovah." So in Hosea we read, "They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not" (viii. 4). They "weave a net" or "plait alliances" without his Spirit, and add sin to sin. They go down into Egypt without having inquired of Jehovah's mouth, and flee to the fortress of Pharaoh, to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt. 1. The Divine leading and inspiration make men humble, while self-will and self-reliance are stubborn, obstinate. 2. Where the first step has been wrong, every subsequent step aggravates the error. 3. The root of a mistaken policy is a false reliance, dependence on an "arm of flesh." There is a true and a false self-reliance: that which forgets God is ignorant and impious; that which recognizes him as the Source of all true intelligence is genuine. To the external observer the difference between acting from the self-centre and the God-centre, between "going in one's own strength" and "going in the strength of the Lord of hosts," may not be perceptible. It must be known in the *feeling* of the actor, and in the *results* of his action.

II. THE RESULTS OF THE POLICY. The fortress of Pharaoh will become a shame to them, and the refuge in Egypt's shadow confusion. "Shame and confusion of face;"

great Scripture words, most expressive of the results of false principles, false policy, obstinate error. 1. It is the very bitterness of ill success to feel that it is the harvest of our own faults; while misfortune is sweetened at its bitterest by the consciousness of having followed the light to the best of one's ability. The prophet follows in imagination this mistaken embassy into the heart of Egypt. They will come to Zoan (or Tanis), and to Hanes (or Heracleopolis), but will be abashed to find that in the expected saviours and helpers no salvation is to be found. 2. That bitterness is aggravated by the sense of the great toil and suffering which has only led to failure. How different the journey *from* Egypt and that *to* Egypt! Then men were led through "that great and terrible wilderness," full of the fiery serpents and scorpions and lions, the land of drought, and there were fed with manna (Deut. viii. 15; Jer. ii. 6). And *now*, after encountering all these dangers, they are to find, after all, that there is no help in Egypt, though they have carried thither rich presents on asses and on camels. Emphatic is the prophet, "Yea, the Egyptians; in vain, and empty is their help, therefore I proclaim concerning it, Rahab, they are utter indolence." There is a play on the name here, which cannot well be rendered in English. But Egypt may stand as a type of the "world," the absence of true principle, or the principle of policy as opposed to reliance on God. And then the lesson will be the inherent weakness of all worldly policy, as compared with simple trust in God and obedience to his dictates.—J.

Vers. 8—18.—"*A testimony for ever.*" The prophet pauses. Perhaps he hears an inner voice bidding him to write down a few words, such as the last significant *Rahab*. As in ch. viii. 1, the inscription is to be on a large tablet, set up in a conspicuous place, so that he who runs may read. Then he is to inscribe the prophecy more fully on a scroll. *Litera scripta manet.* The oracle, the oral utterance, transferred to parchment, becomes a κτῆμα εἰς ἀεί, a "possession for ever." The perpetuity of his protest and warning must be secured. The word rendered "inscribe" is more literally rendered "carve." Every earnest man has surely something worth thus carving, inscribing, engraving, somewhere, on some material—tablet, book, or "fleshy table of the heart;" the condensation of a life-experience, the sum of life-truths, the whole self-revelation, which is at the same time God's revelation to his soul of what is substantial and eternal.

I. THE NEED FOR SUCH INSCRIPTION. The people refuse to listen to any but flattering prophecies. They are disobedient and untruthful at heart. They refuse to *listen* to the prophet's message; then they must be made to *look* upon it in a permanent form. None are so blind as those who will not see, unless it be those who will not let others see. Light, more light, is our constant need: what shall be said of those who would stay the hand that is drawing up the blinds from the windows of the soul? What more precious than *insight?* How should we cherish the man who sees deeper into the heart of things, or gathers up the scattered fragments of truth into one inspiring unity of representation; the mind gifted with the power to shed luminous effects upon what were otherwise gloomy in life's outlook! How all-precious is that purer eloquence, not of ephemeral and party passion, but of the truth which is of no party nor time! How shall these elements of indispensable worth be preserved? Can we trust them to the popular memory and heart? Alas! no, or not entirely. In the hour of excitement and passion all will be forgotten. "You shall not prophesy unto us right things," has been, in effect, the cry of the multitude again and again at such hours. The Jewish prophets themselves felt these things keenly. "Don't preach!" is, in effect, the cry by which they are met. Or, "Preach to us of wine and strong drink"—any doctrine of indulgence, is the demand (Micah ii. 6, 11; cf. Amos ii. 12). If the prophet sternly resisted this temper of the people, and told the homely truth that God had forsaken them because they had forsaken him, a shower of stones was likely to be the dreadful answer, as in the case of the martyr Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21). Greedy is the appetite for "smooth things" and "illusions," and never wanting a supply of such flattering prophets who will run, though Jehovah has not sent them, and utter what he has not said (Jer. xxiii. 21). There is a demand for those who will make flexible what he has made inflexible, mark out a deviating path from that which he has traced straight and plain. Nay, some would be glad to efface the thought of God from their minds, because thus they would efface the sense of responsibility, "Abolish out of our sight the Holy One of Israel!" For then there will be free course for all licence.

From all this we see the need of religious literature. Libraries may be burned; a few manuscripts worth more to mankind than gold and silver will be preserved. The truth in Isaiah has been preserved for us by the art of writing, has come down to us in the form of Scripture. Let us thank God for art as the handmaid of religion. At every epoch in the history of the world, religious life is threatened with decay or degeneration; but it will renew itself from the sacred "records of the past."

II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE TESTIMONY. 1. *Simple faith in the Eternal opposed to worldly policy.* We must, in order to apprehend the nature of the "testimony for ever," strip away the temporary references, and regard Rahab and Israel as types of permanent phases of character (Cheyne). What does "Rahab" stand for? "Perverseness and crookedness" (or oppression). Crookedness and frowardness mean what we mean by "unprincipled conduct" (comp. Prov. ii. 15; iv. 24). To *trust in* shrewdness and policy—this is *worldliness.* It is one of the many ways in which man's wit would contend with eternal wisdom. And punishment must surely attend upon this sin, according to the laws of the Divine kingdom. Various is the imagery under which Scripture represents the connection between evil in the mind and the result—first in sin, then in destruction. The strong will be as tow, and burn unquenchably; the foolish will conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble, or will be burned as thorns (cb. i. 31; xxxiii. 11, 12). Here guilt is compared in its result to the cracking or bulging of a wall, which suddenly crashes down in ruin; to a pitcher dashed violently to the ground, and broken into a multitude of fragments, so that it can never be of the slightest use again. But the vessels of God's fashioning shall endure. Let us be content to be what God would make of us; self-devices that would contravene his purpose will be "ground to powder." 2. *The condition of deliverance, returning.* From what? Is it the general sense of *conversion*—the absolute turning once for all, in choice and conduct, from moral evil? Or is it rather, more specifically, the relinquishment of the search for worldly aids? "Self-chosen ways," "self-confident works," seem certainly to be meant. Would they but lay aside this restless eagerness and over-anxious care for safety, and simply fall upon the Almighty arms! Such lessons can never be obsolete. Trust in God does not imply supineness, but it should still excessive and feverish fears. Behind all our plans and proposals, he is thinking and acting; if they are unsound, they must come to nought; if sound, they will be furthered. "Take heed and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted." The worldly mind will lean on worldly support—swift horses of Egypt or the like, only to find themselves outmatched upon their own chosen ground. "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one." Mere numbers give no strength. Strength is in being able to stand alone, if need be. To find one's self suddenly deserted, "as a mast on the top of a mountain, a signal on a hill," is often the fate of those whose only policy is to side with numbers and with power. 3. *The compassion of Jehovah.* Human needs call forth Divine deeds. We are to think of God as One who longs to manifest and exert himself for the good of his creatures; as One who is hindered by human pride, impatience, petulance; as One who therefore waits for his opportunity and fit season to be gracious; as One who is ever true to himself, constant to his covenant, keeping favour for his people and wrath for his foes. How happy, then, those who in turn "long for Jehovah"!—whose eyes are directed to the "hills whence cometh help!" who watch his pleasure as the servant that of his master, the handmaiden that of her mistress! "To possess God there must be that in us which God can possess. Still to *aspire* after the Highest is our wisdom; to cease from aspiration is to fall into weakness."—J.

Vers. 19—26.—*The blessedness of Zion.* Throughout the book the idea of temporal blends with that of spiritual weal. The images are drawn from the state of temporal happiness and prosperity. Yet Zion and Jerusalem may be regarded as symbolical of the Church in general.

I. JOY IN GOD. There will be "no more weeping." Tears are significant of the lot of humanity; and in the poetry of the Old Testament we hear, as Lord Bacon says, "as many hearse-like airs as carols," and the pencil of the Holy Ghost has laboured more in depicting the sorrows of David than the felicities of Solomon. It is because the gospel meets the mood of tears in us that its assurances fall so sweetly on

the heart. Burns the poet said, "After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial Heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness, and riches, and honours, and prudence, and wisdom; I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minion of fortune." It is this way of thinking—it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm, "what truth on earth so precious as the lie"? What is needed is "the expulsive power of a new affection in the sense of the nearness of God—the sense that he does hear and that he does answer out of the vastness and the void." And he will so answer, if he be sought for with "all the heart" (Jer. xxix. 12—14).

II. THE BLESSING OF TEACHERS. On the one hand, here is physical want—"bread of adversity, and water of affliction." On the other hand, a perpetual supply of spiritual food and spiritual consolation. The best of the people felt that it was the saddest thing that could be suffered—to have no more "signs" from God, to be destitute of the prophet, and of the man of superior insight (Ps. lxxiv. 9). The famine of "not hearing the Word of Jehovah" (Amos viii. 11) is bitterer than hunger or thirst. The effect may be traced to a definite cause—the sin of the people or of the teachers themselves (ch. xliii. 27). The one might be unworthy to listen to, the other to deliver, the truth of God (ch. xliii. 27). There is no calling more glorious, none which leads to a more lustrous immortality (Dan. xii. 3), than that of the religious teacher, none which is of greater service in the promotion of the kingdom of God. If so great be the blessing of the ministry of the truth, it flows from the goodness of God that, in the happy times to come, teachers shall never be absent from the people.

III. THE BLESSING OF INWARD ILLUMINATION. The "word behind them" may be the Bath-Kol, the daughter of the Voice, as the Jews say, or, according to a way of thinking more familiar to ourselves, the voice of conscience. "God is not a hidden God in the sense that his life is closed up within himself. His Word goes forth to the world, that it may come into being, and to the children of men that they may know it and find life in it (Ps. xxxiii. 6; cf. Deut. iv. 12; 1 Sam. iii. 4; 1 Kings xix. 11, *sqq.*). (On the Bath-Kol, see Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5; John xii. 28.) The notion is that of invisible and unexpected agency. The admonitions of providence, of conscience, of the Holy Spirit, seem often to come *behind* us—to *recall* us from the path on which we were going, from the course that would be fraught with danger. When in danger of straying to this side or to that, the voice will call us back. In this respect the Divine voice is like the *dæmonion* of Socrates, which was a restraining influence.

IV. PURITY AND PROSPERITY. A symptom of a return to true religion will be the casting away of the relics and reminders of idolatry—the defiling in the Name of the holy God of that which to heathen eyes was holy. Josiah's conduct was an example of this (2 Kings xxiii.). The expression of abhorrence for the symbol expresses at the same time abhorrence for the thing symbolized. The repentance of the individual, the reformation of the nation, must be signalized by the "rending of the idol," not merely from its high place, but from the heart itself. When the heart is brought into the fuller knowledge of God, it loves what he loves, and hates what he hates. The thought of what is "an abomination to Jehovah" (Deut. vii. 25) is reflected in an intense distaste in the soul. 2. This will be consistent with external prosperity. Rain will come down upon the sown seed. As the withholding of the rain followed upon national iniquity as the greatest curse (Zech. xiv. 17, 18), so the giving of the rain meant at once all physical blessing and all Divine favours (Zech. x. 1, etc.). Bread—rich and abundant produce of the land—cattle teeming in the wide pastures;—it is the happy picture of a golden age. Bread and water—simple elements of living; yet what poetry hangs upon their supply! and what woe, what tragedy and horror, upon the want of them!—J.

Ver. 15.—*Sources of strength.* "In quietness and in confidence shall your strength." Because, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" When the winds are in our favour, all we have to do is to set our sails. When the tides are with us, we need not fret concerning the issues of the voyage. God is on the side of the just man, the true man, the pure man. The disciples of his Son are not likely to lose his favour

and reward. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

I. THE DICTUM IS DIVINE. "Thus saith the Lord God." There is direct and special emphasis given to this promise. And he calls himself "the Holy One of Israel." So that the "holy people" need not fear, inasmuch as the Holy One cannot lie, cannot prosper anything opposed to holiness, cannot therefore let evil overcome goodness. What we have to look to is our *state*. We need not dream that quietness will help us if it be the indifference of sloth or the quiescence of an indulgent soul in evil. But if "holiness unto the Lord" be written on our hearts and lives, God, who is the Holy One, will surely prosper us.

II. THE DECLARATION IS DUAL. "Quietness *and* confidence." Because there *is* a quietness which comes from the paralysis of fear, or from the coma of fatalism. We are to have a confidence which keeps the soul alive, and fills it with intense ardour and devotion. Nature is intensely active, but all her ministrations, as in the light and the dew, are quiet. Fussiness and loudness are no true signs of energy. Nay, rather they bespeak a superficial and shallow nature. Confidence is the child of wisdom and courage. It is not the result of ignorance, or of under-estimating the power of our foes. It takes cognizance of them all—their number and their variety and their ubiquity, but then, looking up to him who is mightier than them all, it says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

III. THE STRENGTH IS WITHIN. What we need is not so much a lessening of the forces without us, but a strength in the inward man to overcome them. Take temptation. We are told that no temptation shall come but such as we are able to bear. We are not promised immunity from keen attacks. Everything depends upon the state of the soul. Temptation, to be successful, requires correspondency *within*. Sparks falling upon the ocean are not dangerous. Christ said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Take trial. Sorrow, coming to the worldly heart, breaks it down—it ends in the death of hope and energy and joy. Sorrow to the Christian is an angel of discipline. The soul is sustained by the presence within us of the Man of sorrows, who can make all grace abound. So even the martyr and the confessor have been able to rejoice; even Paul and Silas sang "songs in the night." "As thy day thy strength shall be." This, then, is proven true in human history, and must be accepted as a fact. Spiritual consciousness is worthy of as much honour and to be accepted with confidence, as the boasted facts of science. The promise, therefore, is comforting to every generation. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—7.—*Going down into Egypt.* The prophet of Jehovah utters another "woe," he denounces another sin; for the people of the Lord, in the day of their difficulty, have looked, not to their Divine Redeemer, but to that arm of flesh in which they should not have trusted, and by which they will be abandoned. We see—

I. THEIR SIN. It is threefold. 1. *Desertion of God.* They take counsel, but not now of God, as in better days (Josh. vii. 6; Judg. xx. 27; 1 Sam. xxiii. 2; xxx. 8); they made alliance, but not with the Divine consent—not "of my Spirit" (ver. 1); they did not ask "at God's mouth" (ver. 2). Once they would not have dreamed of acting without encouragement from God; now they look elsewhere for sanction. This desertion of him who was their Lord, and who had so often proved himself their Deliverer, had its root in: 2. *Distrust of God.* They trusted in "the shadow of Egypt" (ver. 2), because they had come to distrust the "shadow of his wings" in whom David found his refuge until his calamity was overpast (Ps. lvii. 1). It was the loss of their faith in God which made them cast about for another power which should befriend and deliver them. And this deplorable distrust was due to: 3. *The spirit of materialism.* They preferred the visible nation to the invisible God; the fleshly "power" to the Divine Spirit; the material army of Egypt, whose forces they could count and whose weapons they could handle, to the unseen One whose angels were beyond the range of vision, and whose instruments were unfashioned by human hands. *This is the sin of mankind.* Desertion of God, departure from his side and from his service; desertion springing from distrust, and this distrust rooted in a wretched and pitiful materialism.

II. THEIR PUNISHMENT. 1. *Fruitless expenditure.* (Vers. 4—6.) They would take the trouble to secure princely ambassadors, and these would travel through inhospitable and perilous regions, laden with costly gifts, paying servile attention to the foreigner—and all for nothing; an immensity of trouble and no profit whatever. 2. *Bitter disappointment.* (Ver. 7.) The land from which they hoped so much would prove utterly useless; their expectations would end in nothing but chagrin; their exasperation could only find expression in an opprobrious epithet, in a bitter epigram directed against Egypt. 3. *Mortification.* "The strength of Pharaoh shall be their shame," etc. (vers. 3, 5). The result of this attempted alliance would be political reproach; and the court and the nation would be ashamed of having taken a step that turned out so ill. These are the common penalties of sin: the *waste* of that which is precious—time, money, strength, reputation, energy, affection, etc.; *disappointment*—the soul finding out that that in which it trusted cannot do what it hoped, that it leaves it still empty, still athirst, still poor; *shame*—the position in which it is dishonoured of men, and has keenly to reproach itself for folly into which it need not have fallen, for sin which it might easily have shunned.

III. THEIR ALTERNATIVE. God was with them; one of his truest and most faithful prophets was at hand, accessible at any hour. Why not trust in the Almighty? Why not take counsel of the All-wise? The alternative to sin is always at hand. The gates of obedience are unfastened; the oracles of God are open; the paths of piety are such as every foot may tread.—C.

Vers. 8—14, 17, 18.—*Aspects of sin.* This severe denunciation by the prophet of the sins of the Jews may remind us of some of the darker and sadder aspects of sin itself.

I. THE PERMANENCY OF ITS RECORD. Isaiah was to record the guilt of "the rebellious children" in a book, that it might be there inscribed "for the time to come for ever and ever." And in the sacred volume there stand written, to be read for all time, the accusations which the Lord brought against Israel; the record of their national perversity remains after all these centuries have passed, and will remain for centuries to come. Apart from such instrumentality as was here employed, the sins we commit find a lasting record. They are printed in the faces and the forms of men, they are legible in their lives, they are apparent in their characters, they survive in their reputation, they live on for ever in the ineffaceable influences which are left behind them and which are transmitted from age to age. The sins of the fathers may be read in the lowered and injured lives of the children unto the third and the fourth generation. We little think how and where and when our guilt is being recorded in one or other of the many books of God.

II. ITS OBDURACY. "Children that will not hear the Law of the Lord" (ver. 9). Contumacy reaches its utmost length when it closes its ears against the Word of the all-wise and almighty God. It is by degrees that the heart becomes thus hardened. Diminished pleasure, inattention, avoidance, the closed ear of the soul—by such stages as these man descends to the obduracy which is here rebuked.

III. ITS POWER OF IMPOSING ON ITSELF. (Vers. 10, 11.) When sin is in full possession of the soul it makes men believe that to be false which they do not wish to be true, and that true which they do not like to consider false; it prevails on them to regard the rugged things to be wrong, and the smooth things to be sound; then it leads them to find a voice for this palatable and comforting doctrine; so that they encourage those to speak who will keep silence as to all Divine but disagreeable truth, and give utterance to pleasant and profitable perversions.

IV. THE APPARENT SUDDENNESS OF ITS PENALTY. (Ver. 13.) The spendthrift is getting poorer every month for many years, but bankruptcy comes on him suddenly at last. The dishonest man is getting hopelessly involved for years, but his reputation is blasted in an hour. The fascinations of the cup are long gaining ascendency, but in some evil day the victim of this baleful vice is seen staggering in the streets. Passion may have been winning the mastery from youth upwards, but at a certain point it blazes forth, and the life-blood is shed. Penalty generally comes at last with seeming suddenness, like the breaking wall that has long bent but comes down in a moment.

V. THE COMPLETENESS OF ITS PENALTY. (Ver. 14.)

VI. ITS APPROPRIATENESS. (Ver. 16.) The punishment of Judah's sin should have

a marked correspondence with the guilt itself. This is constant. Sins of the flesh make their mark upon the body; sins of the mind leave their stain upon the spirit; folly in the home will end in domestic sorrow; he that withholds from others starves himself; he that oppresses others does violence to his own soul, etc. There will always be found a fitness in the penalty to the sin for which a man is suffering. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap;" he that soweth the wind, shall reap the whirlwind (Gal. vi. 7; Hos. viii. 7).—C.

Ver. 15.—*Quiet strength.* These beautiful words suggest—

I. THE FIRST DUTY OF THE ERRING. Judah had forsaken God to find a refuge in another power; the first duty of the nation, therefore, was "to return" unto the Lord, and to find its rest and its salvation in him. This is now and ever the immediate duty of all wanderers from God; both of those who have never been reconciled to him through Jesus Christ, and of those who, like the Jews on this occasion, have temporarily forsaken his service. The way of return is that of penitent confession (Rom. x. 10), of trust in the Divine promise (Acts x. 43), of surrender to the Divine will (Acts ix. 6).

II. THE STRENGTH OF QUIET ACTIVITY. "In quietness . . . shall be your strength." It is a common fallacy that noise and strength are closely allied. On the contrary, it is the quiet and even the silent things which are the strong ones. The thunder startles or appals, but it effects nothing; gunpowder deafens the ear, but it enriches no one; tempestuous rhetoric excites to momentary force of feeling, but it adds nothing to character. It is the silent forces of gravitation and electricity acting for ages without being known to exist; it is the soft sunshine and the still rains of heaven; it is the quiet words of the calm teacher finding their way to the mind and working conviction and conversion there;—it is in these things, and in things like these, that real power resides. The quiet strength of a gentle mother's purity and love, of a faithful father's warning, of an honoured teacher's counsel and example, of an earnest Church's testimony and work;—these are the God-given agencies by which the world is to be won to righteousness and truth. Noisy, spasmodic, irregular outbursts may be auxiliaries, but they are *only that.*

III. THE POWER OF FAITH. "In confidence shall be your strength." Sometimes we have simply to wait for God, and the best thing we can do is to "be still" and wait; our activity would only be harmful (see Exod. xiv. 13). So it was on this historical occasion (see ch. xxxvii.). So was it often with our Lord's disciples (Mark iv. 39, 40; Acts i. 4). So is it now, when in duty or in danger we have done all that we can do; then we wait for God—our expectation is in him only (Ps. xxxix. 7; lxii. 5).—C.

Ver. 18.—*God's waiting and ours.* I. GOD'S WAITING FOR US. "Will the Lord wait." We may look at: 1. *The occasions of his waiting.* He waits "that he may be gracious." (1) That he may show his grace in forgiveness; in "having mercy upon us," or in making us to feel that we are the subjects of his mercy. (2) That he may show his grace in interposition, delivering from danger, relieving from distress, saving in sickness. (3) That he may show his grace in final and complete redemption (Rom. viii. 23)—the taking his children away from the struggle and sorrow of earth to the rest and joy of heaven. 2. *The reason of his waiting.* It is because "the Lord is a God of judgment," or of rectitude. (1) He cannot forgive us till we return in spirit to him and accept his rule, until we obey his supreme command (John vi. 29). (2) He cannot interpose until his intervention is fitted to purify and sanctify us. (3) He cannot call us home until the privilege and discipline of time have prepared us for the scenes and spheres of eternity.

II. OUR WAITING FOR GOD. "Blessed are all they that wait for him." 1. Blessed is the *patient inquirer;* for he who seeks the truth and waits till light shines in upon his soul will surely find his goal. 2. Blessed is the *patient worker;* for he who sows the good seed of the kingdom and waits for God to give the increase will "doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." 3. Blessed is the *patient sufferer;* for he who "waits for the morning" through the night of pain, or loneliness, or poverty, or any other ill, will find that the glory which is to be revealed will make the sufferings of the present time incomparably small (Rom. viii. 18). Now God waits

for us, and we for him. A few steps more and his largest promises and our highest hopes will be all fulfilled.—C.

Vers. 19—26.—*The people of God in their prosperity.* These verses are primarily applicable, and they are more or less true as they are applied, to the return of the Jews from captivity, and their residence in their own land. But they find a larger fulfilment in the condition of the Church of Christ in its last days. Possibly they anticipate the felicities of the heavenly future. We refer them to the Church in its prosperity, and conclude—

I. THAT THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE THOSE THAT HAVE KNOWN A TIME OF TROUBLE. Dark days have passed over their heads; there has been "the breach of his people, and the stroke of his wound" (ver. 26). God once made them to "eat the bread of adversity," etc. (ver. 20). They have passed through grave spiritual anxieties; they have felt the burden of unforgiven sin; they have sighed for the sense of God's favour; they have known the miseries of separation from God, and the weariness of a life unbrightened with sacred joy.

II. THAT IN THEIR DISTRESS THEY MADE EFFECTUAL APPEAL TO GOD. (Ver. 19.) God is never deaf to the cry of sorrow; but to the appeal of the penitent spirit, longing to return unto him, his ear is peculiarly alive; he will be "very gracious" at the voice of that cry—"when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." No loudest sounds will drown the sigh of the contrite spirit, no multiplied activities will prevent the heavenly Father from giving it his immediate regard.

III. THAT THE DAY OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE IS ONE OF VERY BLESSED ILLUMINATION. In the day of its prosperity there should be abundance of light for the Christian Church. Its teachers should not have to hide in obscurity, but should be visible and accessible to all (ver. 20); and there should be times when the light of Divine truth would be not only clear, but brilliant and powerful, making other days to seem dark by comparison (ver. 26; see 2 Cor. iii. 9, 10). Compared with the condition of heathen lands, or even with the state of Israel under Samuel or David, or even with many Christian countries now, how blessed the state in which the gospel of the grace of God shall be made known in its freedom and its fulness in every town and hamlet, and in every cottage home!

IV. THAT THIS DAY OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE WILL BE ONE OF KIND AND FAITHFUL WATCHFULNESS. (Ver. 21.) The vision is one of high, but not heavenly, blessedness; of advanced, but not absolute excellency. The citizens of the holy kingdom will be found walking in the King's highway, but there will remain a tendency to "turn to the right hand or to the left," to go off into by-paths of error, or mistake, or unwisdom, if not of actual transgression. In this case there will be the faithful monitor, the Christian teacher, who will be ready with the timely intervention, "This is the way, walk ye in it." This readiness to intervene *at the moment of digression* ought to characterize our own times; it should be the holy habit, the careful acquirement, of the Christian pastor. On the other hand, a readiness to be admonished is one of the graces of a godly character.

V. THAT THE TIME OF TRUE PROSPERITY WILL BE MARKED BY THE DECISIVE INTOLERANCE OF EVIL. (Ver. 22.) They that name the Name of Christ will not only "depart from all iniquity," but they will reprobate it; they will thrust it away; they will not like even to allude to shameful things (Eph. v. 3)—these will be hateful, intolerable to them. We may measure our nearness to God by the degree of our abhorrence of evil (Heb. i. 13; Rom. xii. 9).

VI. THAT THE TIME OF CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE WILL BE ONE OF ABOUNDING JOY. (Vers. 23—25.) This language is clearly figurative; it is the utterance of exultation. Everything contributes to joyous prosperity—the timely rain, the large increase of seed, the rich pastures, abundance of food for cattle as well as for man, unfailing "brooks that make the meadows green." The land will laugh with exuberance, the nation will exult in overflowing wealth. In the days of unfettered liberty and universal privilege the Christian Church will delight itself in God; its songs of peace and of hope will arise from every valley; its life will be touched and lighted with the sunshine of a holy gladness. The light of God's countenance will rest upon it, and it will rejoice greatly in his salvation.—C.

Vers. 27—33.—*Judgment and joy.* This forcible, energetic language, in which darkest shadow and brightest sunshine very strikingly intermingle, may remind us—

I. THAT GOD DOES COME IN TERRIBLE JUDGMENTS TO THE CHILDREN OF MEN. 1. Sometimes to men collectively—to societies, to cities, to nations. 2. At other times to individual men. In the special ordering or in the permission of his Divine providence he sends the overwhelming loss and consequently reduced or even impoverished estate, or the wasting and consuming sickness, or the undermining and final destruction of influence, or the shattering of power, or sudden, perhaps violent, death. God lets such things overtake the guilty, that the pictorial and poetical language of the text is applicable. It is as if his "anger burned," as if his "lips were full of indignation;" his judgments come down as an overflowing stream, they cast forth the guilty like a winnowing-shovel; his glorious voice is heard, his arm descends in righteous retribution.

II. THAT THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IS ACCOMPANIED WITH THE JOY OF MAN. "Ye shall have a song, as in the night . . . and gladness of heart" (ver. 29); "in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, . . . it shall be with tabrets and harps" (ver. 32). Here and elsewhere the judgments of God are made the occasion of human thankfulness and joy. It is clear: 1. That in such joy there should be *no element of vindictiveness.* It would be positively unchristian to find a source of satisfaction in the bodily or mental suffering of men because they have injured us (Rom. xii. 19, 20). Christian magnanimity should rise to the height of earnestly desiring that its foes may be won to truth, wisdom, and eternal life. 2. That there may be in such joy *the element of righteous satisfaction;* not, indeed, that men suffer, but that their sin receives its appropriate mark of Divine disapproval; that the integrity of the Divine rule is vindicated; that God's presence and his holiness are seen to be near and not afar off. This is the spirit of the psalmist (Ps. xcvii. 1). 3. That there may be also *the element of human sympathy.* Often at such times we have great gladness of heart, because, when he that once "smote with a rod" is himself "beaten down" (ver. 31), those who were smitten by the oppressor walk in liberty and security. The humiliation of the wrong-doer is the exaltation of the righteous—is the enfranchisement of the holy and the wise. 4. That there will also be *the element of holy expectation.* When Sennacherib has God's bridle in his jaws and is caused to wander far from his chosen path, Jerusalem is safe and Jehovah's service is secure. When the enemies of religion are scattered, there is a goodly prospect of opened sanctuaries, of multiplied privileges, of increase of piety and virtue on every hand. When the persecutor perishes the minister of truth rejoices greatly, and there is music in the house of the Lord because there is every reason to hope that the Churches, having rest, will "walk in the fear of God . . . *and be multiplied*" (Acts ix. 31).

1. It is well, in the time of danger or distress, to ask for Divine deliverance. 2. It is better to ask for Divine strength to be enabled to overcome the evil from which we suffer by the good which we do (Rom. xii. 21).—C.

Ver. 1.—*Adding sin to sin.* This prophetic warning seems to have been spoken when the embassy to seek offensive and defensive alliance with Egypt had actually started on its way. The sin of neglecting to seek direction from God in the time of national anxiety was now added to by the sin of openly seeking help from man. There was a constant disposition on the part of the Jews of the later monarchy to seek their safety in national alliances. When imperilled by the Israelites, they sought help from the Syrians. When threatened by the Syrians, they made treaties with the Assyrians. When the Assyrians became their enemies, they tried to strengthen themselves with the support of hesitating, inactive Egypt. First men lose their faith in God; then they neglect to seek or obey him; and then they turn to mere human helpers. So sin follows on sin. Illustrating this from life and experience, with precise applications to each audience, it may be shown that—

I. SIN IS ADDED TO SIN IN THE NATURAL ORDER OF EVENTS. It is but the simple fact of life that a sin never goes alone. It always has its companions and its followers. It must, if for this one reason only—every sin is a disturbance of order by man's self-will; that self-will is sure to go on sinning in the effort to get the order right. The child who finds order disturbed by some wrong act, goes on to tell lies in its vain effort to get the order straight again.

II. SIN IS ADDED TO SIN BY THE INFLUENCE OF HABIT. There is a strange tendency in us all to do a second time what we have done once. This has not been sufficiently noticed, though it is the basis on which criminals are often detected. A sin done once, we are actually disposed to do again; and there seems to be even a bodily bias towards this formation of habits. Parents and teachers have to watch for it, that they may check and correct it.

III. SIN IS ADDED TO SIN BY THE ENTICEMENTS OF SATAN. For an act of sin is giving Satan the advantage over us, putting ourselves into his power. And the increase of that power depends on leading us to do evil again. He will not let us stop and think. We must go on, as the gambler does, until we are enslaved and ruined.

IV. SIN IS ADDED TO SIN AS A BEGINNING OF PUNISHMENT. A man is usually "heady and high-minded" at the successful result of his first wrong; so, in order that he may be smitten and humbled, God lets him go on from sin to sin, until shame whips him awake, so that he may see his iniquity. The way round to right has often to be by the mire of sin added to sin. There is a gracious sense in which God lets wilful men alone awhile, as he left these Jewish leaders who advocated the Egyptian alliance, that they might convince themselves of their own wickedness and folly.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Trusting others than Jehovah.* "Relying upon human aid, involving a distrust of the Divine promises, was a crying sin of the ancient Church, not at one time only, but throughout her history." It is quite as truly the crying sin of the modern Church, and of the Christian individual. In every time of pressure and need we first fly to some form of human help. It is either the expression of "first simplicity," or else of "cultured sanctity," to act on the words, "Our help is in the Lord our God."

I. THE DELUSIONS ON WHICH OUR TRUSTING OTHERS REST. Some of these take shape, and we can recognize them. Others lie down in men's souls, doing their mischievous work, but never getting put into propositions, which can be fairly dealt with. They are such as the following: 1. God is far away, and his help is not anything really practical. 2. God does not heed; he is so largely concerned in the great affairs of the universe that it is only an imagination that he can take interest in an individual life. 3. God is so long about his work; and impatient man cannot bear waiting—if he is in any trouble, he wants it dealt with at once. Compare the King of Israel, in the famine-time, saying pettishly to Elisha, "What should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 4. God makes such hard terms. He always wants repentance and submission, and letting our own hands hang down; he crushes human energy and enterprise. The very statement of these cherished delusions of men suggests their correctives. Surely to all who cherish them the great Father is an unknown God.

II. THE FORMS WHICH OUR TRUSTING OTHERS MAY TAKE. The Jewish nation leaned on the help of another nation in her extremity. We, in our *individual* life and experience, are in danger of some form of sacerdotalism; we pin our faith to some sect-leader, some scientific teacher, some admired statesman, some popular preacher, some assertive priest. Thousands of people find individual responsibility in religion too heavy a burden for them to bear, and do not grasp the truth that God is with them in the bearing, and that it is their dignity to stand under the yoke only with God. Sacerdotalism is just the "man-trust" which prophets denounce. In *public* life and association the tendency is to lean on, and worship material strength. We seek the help of riches for the carrying out of all our religious schemes. We fly to men rather than to God.

III. HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE ALIKE PROVE THE PRACTICAL FOLLY, AS WELL AS THE INGRATITUDE AND REBELLIOUSNESS, OF THUS FORSAKING GOD. Our trusts prove, like Egypt, only *shebheth*, inactive, do-nothings (see ver. 7). Egypt promised much, but failed utterly in the day of trial.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Quietness and confidence.* These terms are related. Quietness is the result of confidence. Confidence is the secret of quietness. The quietness thought of by the prophet was the abandonment of the disquieting and distracting search for earthly aids, as in the case of seeking help from Egypt; the confidence he commends is that patient waiting on God and waiting for God, which are the necessary expressions of our faith in him.

I. A GREAT ATTAINMENT. So great, so nearly impossible for men while on the earth, that, despairingly, men have thought of it as only reached in the grave whither man hastens. Byron says, "I found in the Certosa Cemetery such a beautiful inscription; in Italian the words are absolute music: 'Luigi Martini implora eterna quiete.' On the restless, tossing, changing earth who can be quiet?" "The word is like an angry sea. The vessel of our life is rocked and dashed hither and thither, as blast after blast assails it, and wave after wave comes rolling on. Think what that power must be which comes into a human life in such a condition as this, and gives 'quietness'—a quietness so deep that none can make trouble." Quietness never comes by the smoothing of circumstances. They never are smoothed for more than a very "little while." And fears of the clouds that are gathering disturb even the "little while." Quietness only comes by soul-mastery over circumstances. Hearts must win peace, and then only can they make peace.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH QUIETNESS MAY BE REACHED. Through confidence; heart-confidence—heart-confidence in God. "We must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God and his power and his goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with" (Matthew Henry). In this matter the principle holds that our own endeavour must go along with God's bestowments. "Work out your own salvation, . . . for it is God that worketh in you." Some of us make no effort to get outside the whirl of life. How can we expect God to give us quietness?

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE USE OF SUCH MEANS. Found in God's gracious ways of giving his people heart-peace, and then peace in circumstances, when they have fully trusted in him.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*The peril of the wilful.* "We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift." *We will*—there is man's sin. That is not a fit position for dependent man ever to take. "They that *will* be rich fall into temptation and a snare." "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we *will* go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. . . . For that ye ought to say, If the *Lord will*, we shall live, and do this, or that." From some points of view these strong-willed men may be regarded as the noble-men of earth. They have a purpose in life, which holds in and guides, as with bit and bridle, all the forces of their being. They are the great men in our mills and warehouses; the foremost as statesmen, and in carrying out great social and national enterprises. They seem to have a power of control over all the circumstances surrounding them, and a power of recoil from the greatest disappointments and disasters. Yet this disposition lays men open to peculiar dangers. Strong will is liable to become self-will—to refuse the ordinance of God; to refuse the help of God; to refuse to wait for God. It stands up in fancied majesty and says, "I will." "Whatever God may say or do, I will. I will be rich, I will be successful, I will be great." When a man in such a spirit says, "I will," he is on the very pit-edge, and on the pit-edge blindfolded.

I. WILFULNESS IS REBELLIOUSNESS. Because man is God's servant, pledged to carry out his Master's will, and not his own will. Man is God's child, and in duty bound to fulfil his Father's commands. Disobedience is rebellion.

II. WILFULNESS IS WEAKNESS. Because man is entirely dependent on the God whose will he refuses, for the means of accomplishing what he determines to do. His wilfulness is as weak as a child's who has no money, no power, but depends entirely on his parents.

III. WILFULNESS IS FOOLISHNESS. For it is a setting of ourselves against the Almighty God, as if he would allow us to shift and rearrange his plans. Man's wilfulness may make a noise, and bring him into trouble; but it is only a child's attempt to hold back the flowing of the great river of God. A little time of vain trying, and then the child is swept away by the flood, which still rolls on.

IV. WILFULNESS IS PERIL. It will be a marvel, almost a miracle, if such a man do

not "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Adversity as Divine bread.* "The bread of adversity, and the water of affliction." We can only think of God by the help of our associations with *man*. Therefore, in the revelation which he has given us in a book, God is spoken of as if he had the *form* of a man (anthropomorphism), and as if he had the *feelings* of a man (anthropopathism). We, indeed, know no other moral beings beside man, and probably our senses would allow of the apprehension of no other. We are not allowed to create material images representing God, but we are allowed to think of God through the figures of the human being. Answering to this is the truth that we can only know our soul through our body; we have to think of it as a kind of spiritual body. So it needs care, clothing, food, etc., even as the body. This is the line on which it can best be shown that adversity is Divine bread for the soul, which must be nourished by appropriate food. Working out this thought, two points may be more especially treated.

I. BREAD IS THE STAPLE FOOD FOR THE BODY. It is in itself sufficient to sustain life; it contains all the necessary elements for the renewal of vitality. So is adversity the staple food for the soul; for it contains all the necessary elements for the renewal of character. Since we are sinners, wayward, and wilful, the prosperities of life are but like luxuries; and adversity is our staple food, which nourishes humility, penitence, godly fear, and trust. The expression is used of King Manasseh, the wilful, who, in prison, was fed with the bread and water of affliction, and thereby nourished unto penitence, forsaking of sin, and hearty return to the God of his fathers. If we pray, "Feed me with food convenient for me," we must clearly see that the answer may include "adversity and affliction."

II. BREAD IS A GENERAL TERM EMBRACING ALL NECESSARY FOOD. And necessary food for the body includes some things that are unpleasant to the taste. Sometimes even medicine is bread—the very best of bread for us under the circumstances. And so our soul-conditions and our soul-culture may make necessary things that are very trying to feeling. "No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby."—R. T.

Ver. 21.—*Sins of will and sins of frailty.* "When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." This is an evident recognition of the infirmities and wanderings of those who do, of set purpose of heart, mean to serve God. The verse is a gracious assurance that, in such times of frailty, God's people shall have due warning and correction. We may take as types of the two kinds of sin—sins of will and sins of frailty—the two persons who were present to the mind of Christ when he spoke as in John xii. 10; and these two persons will illustrate the classes who were in the mind of Isaiah when he gave the warning of the text—the boldly wilful who persisted in the policy of seeking aid from Egypt, and the frail ones whose faith faltered under the pressure of the anxiety of the times and the delay of the Divine intervention. They were swayed to this side or to that, but, nevertheless, tried hard to keep steadily, right on.

I. JUDAS, TYPE OF THOSE WHO ARE HEART-WRONG, INSINCERE, RULED BY CONSIDERATIONS OF SELF-INTEREST. There are no minute details given of the process of Judas's apostasy. There was, indeed, nothing unusual about it. The covetous spirit made him connect himself with Christ chiefly for personal ends. The essential thing in any one who unites with Christ is surrender of *self* and *self-will*, and this surrender Judas never made. The point, however, to be specially dwelt on here is that his great sin was a matter of will, plan, resolve, determination. He did not drift into it; he was not enticed into it; he was not taken at unawares: he schemed it; he willed it; the guilt of it fully rested on him. Whenever men sin with their wills and openly, they must come under the crushings of Divine judgment. Sins of will are rebellions that must be mastered. The distinction between sins of will and sins of frailty may be further shown in King Saul and King David.

II. PETER, TYPE OF THE SINCERE BUT FAULTY AND FRAIL. Compare David. Peter was hasty, impulsive, uncertain, sometimes even weak. "The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak." He swayed now to this side, and now to that, and needed just

such warnings as are provided in the above text. The Apostle John urges on those who are sincere Christians, that if they "say they have no sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them." And these, which at first are "goings aside," "frailties," will soon grow to become "wilfulnesses," if they are not checked and corrected. Therefore may we rejoice in God, and assure our hearts in his promise that the *voice* shall call us back when our feet incline to wander to the right or the left.—R. T.

Ver. 29.—*The joy-song of the delivered.* Reference is to the deliverance of Hezekiah and Judah from the yoke of the Assyrians and the fear of their overwhelming attack. Illustrating the pleasure Eastern people feel in "night-songs," Roberts says, "Music is considered far more enchanting at night than at any other period; it gives cheerfulness in darkness, and pleasure to the heart." Nothing is more common than for adults to sing themselves to sleep; thus, as they recline, they beat a tabret and chant the praises of their gods till, through heaviness, they can scarcely articulate a word. In passing through a village or town at midnight may be heard people at their nightly song, to grace the festive scene, to beguile away their time, to charm their fears, or to procure refreshing sleep."

I. GOD GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT OF OUR FEARS. A striking illustration is found in the times of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx.). A time of exceeding peril and fear came through an invasion of Moabites and Ammonites; the matter was committed to God in prayer; deliverance was assured, and we read that the singers went out before the army, to praise the beauty of holiness, and say, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever." They were to sing their songs of trust while yet the deliverance tarried. Singing songs when we are well out of fears is easy work; singing songs even while struggling with our fears is the beautiful triumph of faith.

II. GOD GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT OF WEEPING. Weeping represents troubles being borne, not troubles only feared. Smiles can break through tears. God gives heart-rest that can give forth a song, even to the sons and daughters of pain and grief.

III. GOD GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT OF WEARY PILGRIMAGE. For oftentimes "waiting work," and the work of keeping steadily on, is very trying and hard. Many a man knows the painful depression of "patient continuance in well-doing." This is typified in the long, dreary journey of Israelites from distant parts of the country to the feasts at Jerusalem. Weary work, indeed, in those slow-travelling days. It is said that each band of pilgrims on its way to Jerusalem was headed by a person who played the flute. Nothing cheers a journey like a song. See the power of music on a soldier's march. Then

> "Sing on your heavenward way,
> Ye ransomed sinners, sing."

IV. GOD GIVES SONGS IN THE NIGHT OF DEATH. Songs in the soul, when lips are sealed in weakness. How often those who watch beside dying saints see the lips moving, and catch faint sounds of the old trustful hymns learned in childhood! Familiar texts and well-loved hymns are the wings that bear many a soul through the long dark valley into the holy realms of light and love and song.—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*The mission of Tophet.* "Fire, being the most destructive of all the elements, is chosen by the sacred writers to symbolize the agency by which God punishes or destroys the wicked. We are not to assume from prophetical figures that material fire is the precise agent to be used. It was not the agency employed in the destruction of Sennacherib, who is the *king* mentioned in the text. He was killed by his two sons, whilst worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god (ch. xxxvii. 38). Tophet properly begins just where the Valley of Hinnom bends round to the east, having the cliffs of Zion on the north, the Hill of Evil Counsel on the south. It terminates at Beer 'Ayub, where it joins the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The cliffs on the south side especially abound in ancient tombs. Here the dead carcases of beasts, and every offal and abomination, were cast, and left to be either devoured by that worm that never died, or consumed by that fire that was never quenched. Hinnom was condemned to this infamous service, perhaps, because in it, when Israel fell into idolatry, they offered their children in sacrifice to Baal." Tophet came to represent the place of punishment, especially that kind of punishment which is destructive rather than remedial.

I. DIVINE PUNISHMENTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL ARE REMEDIAL. We are not able to fit together the fatherly relation and the hopeless destruction of any of his sons. Much of our difficulty in dealing with the conditions of the future life arises from our failing to distinguish between the individual and the corporate life of men. Nations, sects, classes, families even, can be destroyed. Their corporate life may once for all cease. God's judgments may reach them in this form for the sake of, and for the due impression of, the *individual*. We understand the destruction of an army or of a city, but not the destruction of a man.

II. DIVINE PUNISHMENTS OF THE NATION OR THE CLASS MAY BE DESTRUCTIVE. Tophet here is the figure for the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, and of him as king, not as man. Tophet tells of material destructions, and such only can concern man in human and earthly relations. Sodom and Gomorrah may be burned up in the fires of God, destroyed from off the face of the earth; but we know nothing of the standing of individual Sodomites before God. The Canaanite *race* was to be swept from the earth, but we are sure the Judge of all the earth will do right by each Canaanite. God's temporal destructions for corporate sins are part of the world's education, but are no basis for belief in any everlasting material punishments for individuals.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Vers. 1—3.—A FURTHER WARNING AGAINST SEEKING THE ALLIANCE OF EGYPT. This prophecy seems to be quite independent of the last (ch. xxx. 1—7). It may have been given earlier or later. The chief point brought out, which had not distinctly appeared previously, is the value set on the horses and chariots of Egypt in the conflict with Assyria (comp. 2 Kings xviii. 24).

Ver. 1.—**Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help** (comp. ch. xxx. 1, 2; and see also the earlier prophecy, ch. xx. 2—6). The examples of Samaria, Gaza, and Ashdod might well have taught the lesson of distrust of Egypt, without any Divine warnings (see G. Smith's 'Eponym Canon,' pp. 125—131). But the Jews were infatuated, and relied on Egypt despite her previous failures to give effective aid. **And stay on horses.** The Assyrian cavalry was very numerous, and very efficient. It is often represented on the monuments. Egyptian cavalry, on the other hand, is not represented at all; and it may be questioned whether, in the early times, the Egyptian war-horses were not entirely employed in the chariot-service (see 'Pulpit Commentary' on Exodus, p. 321). The later dynasties of Egyptian kings, however, employed cavalry, as appears from 2 Chron. xii. 3; Herod., ii. 162; 'Records of the Past,' vol. ii. pp. 68, 70, 72, etc. **And trust in chariots, because they are many.** The large number of the chariots maintained by the Pharaohs is abundantly evidenced. Diodorus assigns to Sesostris twenty-seven thousand (i. 54, § 4). This is, no doubt, an exaggeration; but the six hundred of the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Exod. xiv. 7), and even the one thousand two hundred of Shishak (2 Chron. xii. 3) are moderate computations, quite in accord with the monuments, and with all that we otherwise know of Egyptian warfare. Egypt exported chariots to the neighbouring countries (1 Kings x. 29), and was at this time the only power which seemed capable of furnishing such a chariot-force as could hope to contend on tolerably even terms with the force of Assyria. **They look not unto the Holy One of Israel** (comp. ch. xxx. 11, 12). The trust in the Egyptian alliance was accompanied by a distrust of Jehovah and his power, and a disinclination to look to him for aid.

Ver. 2.—**Yet he also is wise.** Intense irony. "Wisdom is not wholly confined to the human counsellors whose advice Judah follows (ch. xxix. 14). He (Jehovah) is 'wise' too, and could give prudent counsel if his advice were asked." As he is not consulted, **he will bring evil upon his people, and will not call back, or retract, his words of threatening, but will give them accomplishment, by rising up against the house of the evil-doers** (*i.e.* the Jews), **and their help** (*i.e.* the Egyptians).

Ver. 3.—**Now the Egyptians are men, and not God.** Judah relied on Pharaoh, as on a sort of God, which indeed he was considered in his own country ('Records of the Past,' vol. vi. p. 145, l. 320; p. 148, l. 418, etc.). Isaiah asserts the contrary in the strongest way: the Egyptians, one and all, are men—mere men; and "there is no help in them" (Ps. cxlvi. 3). **Their horses flesh, and not spirit.** The horses, on which so much reliance was placed, were mere animals, subject to all the weakness of the animal

nature, not spirit-horses, with a life and vigour of their own, by which they could be a real tower of strength to those on whose side they ranged themselves. **They all shall fail together**; *i.e.* the helpers and the helped (compare the concluding clauses of ver. 2).

Vers. 4—9.—A PROMISE OF PROTECTION, AND OF THE DISCOMFITURE OF ASSYRIA. In the promise of protection (vers. 4, 5) there is nothing new but the imagery, which is of remarkable beauty. The promise is followed by a brief exhortation (vers. 6, 7); and then the discomfiture of Assyria is declared in the plainest terms, and her flight before the avenging sword of God (vers. 8, 9).

Ver. 4.—**Like as the lion, etc.** The resemblance of this simile to Hom., 'Iliad,' xviii. ll. 161, 162, has been often noticed. In both, the lion has seized his prey, and is crouching over it; the shepherds gather themselves together against him, and seek to scare him away; but he remains firm, undaunted by their threats and cries, never for a moment relinquishing the body of which he has made himself the master. The image is best explained as representing Jehovah, standing over and keeping guard on Jerusalem, which he will allow no one to rend from him. **And the young lion**; rather, *even the young lion* (Lowth). A single animal must be intended. **Roaring on his prey**; rather, *growleth over his prey.* **So shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion**; rather, *so shall the Lord of hosts descend, to fight, on Mount Zion.* If we connect the concluding words of the clause with *tsâbâ*, to fight, the meaning must be "fight against," as Delitzsch shows conclusively. But we may connect them with the more distant *yêrêd*, will descend, in which case they will mean "*on*," or "*upon* Mount Zion" (comp. Exod. xix. 18; Ps. cxxxiii. 3). The best commentators are of opinion that this *must be* the sense. The words are a promise, not a threat.

Ver. 5.—**As birds flying**; rather, *as birds hovering*, or *fluttering*, over their young, to protect them. A second simile, expressive of tenderness, as the former one was of power and strength. **Defending also**, etc. Translate, *defending and delivering, passing over and preserving.* In the word "passing over" there seems to be a reference to the institution of the Passover, when the angel, sometimes identified with Jehovah himself, "passed over" and spared the Israelites.

Ver. 6.—**Turn ye unto him.** Then, at any rate, if not before, turn to him who will have delivered you from so great a peril. "Turn to him, O children of Israel, from whom men have so deeply revolted." The third person is used instead of the second, out of tenderness, not to hurt their feelings by mingling with promise an open rebuke.

Ver 7.—**For in that day every man shall cast away his idols.** "In that day"—the day of Assyria's discomfiture—shall the vanity of idols be seen and recognized. They have not helped Assyria. How should they help Judah (comp. ch. xxx. 22)?

Ver. 8.—**Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man**; rather, *and Assyria shall fall by the sword of one who is not a man.* Assyria's destruction will not be by the visible swords of human enemies, but by the invisible sword of God (comp. 2 Kings xix. 35). **And the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him**; rather, *and the sword of one who is not a mortal shall devour him*—an instance of "synonymous parallelism." **He shall flee**; more literally, *betake himself to flight.* **His young men shall be discomfited**; rather, as in the margin, *shall be for tribute.* They shall become the vassals of a foreign power.

Ver. 9.—**And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear**; rather, *and his Rock shall pass away for fear* (marginal rendering). It is generally agreed by recent commentators (Kay, Delitzsch, Cheyne), that the rock intended, which is contrasted with the "princes" of the next clause, is Assyria's king (see the contrast of the king, who is "a great *rock*," and his princes, in ch. xxxii. 1, 2). (On the hurried flight of Sennacherib to Nineveh, see below, ch. xxxvii. 37.) **His princes shall be afraid of the ensign.** The word *nês*, ensign, seems to be here used collectively. The Assyrian princes would tremble at every signal that they saw displayed along their line of route, expecting some enemy to fall upon them. **His furnace.** Jehovah was at once a Light to his people, and "a consuming Fire" (Heb. xii. 29) to his enemies. His presence, indicated by the Shechinah in the holy of holies, was at once for blessing and for burning.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The folly of trusting in an arm of flesh.* "Put not your trust in princes, nor in any child of man," says the psalmist (Ps. cxlvi. 3); "for there is no help in them." All human props are uncertain—

I. BECAUSE OF HUMAN CHANGEFULNESS. Men do not continue always of one mind. They make promises, and regret that they have made them, and find some way of escaping their force, or else boldly break them with a cynical disregard to what others may think or say. Their interests change, or the views that they take of them; and the wise policy of to-day seems foolishness, or even madness, to-morrow. Some men are actuated by mere caprice, and have no sooner effected a desired purpose than it loses favour in their eyes, and seems to them of little worth. They will make heavy sacrifices to obtain an alliance, and none to maintain it. They sigh always for something that they have not, and despise what they have. Human protection is always uncertain, owing to the fickleness of man, who is naturally "double-minded," and "unstable in all his ways" (Jas. i. 8).

II. BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE INSUFFICIENCY. The human protector may, with the best intentions in the world, prove insufficient. Syria and Ammon summoned Assyria to their aid when they contended with David (2 Sam. x. 6, 16; Ps. lxxxiii. 8); but the result was the entire defeat of the confederate army. Hannibal called on Macedonia to assist him against the Romans; but Macedonia proved too weak, and her efforts resulted in her own subjection. There must, in almost every case, be the risk that the protector, though doing all he can, may fail, and our having called him in exasperate, or even infuriate, our adversary.

III. BECAUSE OF HUMAN GREED AND SELFISHNESS. The protector may become, is only too apt to become, the oppressor and the conqueror. Rome's vast empire was built up largely by taking states under her protection, and then absorbing them. Had Egypt succeeded in defeating Assyria, and rolling back the tide of invasion that had so long been rising higher and higher, and threatening her own independence and that of her neighbours, the result would simply have been that Judæa and Samaria would have been absorbed into Egypt, or at any rate have become Egyptian dependencies. The small state that calls in one powerful kingdom to help her in her struggle against another rarely gains anything more than an exchange of masters.

IV. BECAUSE THE GREATEST HUMAN STRENGTH IS POWERLESS AGAINST GOD. The Egyptians were "men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" (ver. 3). Had all the chariots of Egypt come forth, and all their footmen and all their horsemen, they would not have saved Judah, since God had declared that here there was "no work for Egypt" (ch. xix. 15), and that Judah, if she trusted in Egypt, "should be ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory" (ch. xx. 5). God can strike an army with blindness, as he did that of Benhadad (2 Kings vi. 18) on one occasion; or with panic fear, as he did that of the same monarch on another (2 Kings vii. 6); or he can cause quarrel to break out among the constituent parts of an army, and make the soldiers slay one another (2 Chron. xx. 23); or he can send out a destroying angel, and kill a hundred and eighty thousand men in a night (2 Kings xix. 35). Again, the God of battles determines the issue of battles. "It is nothing to him to help, whether with many or with them that have no power" (2 Chron. xiv. 11). He can cast down and bring to nought the mightiest human protector; he can save, if he wills to save, by his own angelic army, without the intervention of any human aid at all.

Ver. 9.—*The rock of Assyria and the Rock of Israel.* In each case the "rock" was (1) the refuge, stronghold, and main reliance of the people; (2) a person, not an inaccessible height or a fortress; (3) the recognized monarch and master of the nation. But in all other respects the contrast between the two was extreme, the difference immeasurable.

I. ASSYRIA'S ROCK—SENNACHERIB. A man, a weak, fallible, ephemeral man—the creature of an hour—mortal, soon wearied, needing rest and sleep, liable to sickness, daily losing strength, approaching nearer and nearer to the grave. And not only a man, but a wicked man—proud, cruel, contemptuous of his foes, blasphemous towards God, merciless, pitiless! What a poor object on which to place reliance, trust, dependence! No doubt to the Assyrians he seemed a grand figure, seated on his throne of carved cedar and ivory, receiving tribute from kings and princes, and surrounded by his army of perhaps two hundred thousand men. But of what avail was his grandeur? He could not save a single soldier out of the two hundred thousand from an ache or a pain, if God sent them—no, nor from death itself, if their lives were

required by the Most High. To-night Sennacherib lies down to rest, confident of victory, his camp guarded on every side by nigh a quarter of a million of strong warriors. To-morrow he is woke up by a sound of universal wailing. More than a hundred and eighty thousand of his soldiers are dead in their tents. His chances of victory are clean gone; and in half an hour he is an alarmed and trembling fugitive.

II. ISRAEL'S ROCK—JEHOVAH. God, and not man—the Strong One, everlasting, he that "inhabiteth eternity" (ch. lvii. 15), that is never wearied, that needs not to slumber or sleep, that knows no sickness, that never loses strength, that has "neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Heb. vii. 3). And One who to all this might adds tenderness, and the deepest love of his own, and the gentlest care of them. A Rock, but not hard or rugged—a Refuge from all foes, a Shadow from the heat, a Refreshment to the weary, a Help to those in need. God is able to save *all* men, not only from death, but from all suffering or unhappiness. There is no foe that can daunt him, none from whom he will have to flee. And he is willing to save all. Only let them "return to him" (ver. 6), "cry to him" (ch. xxx. 19), trust in him, wait on him. He is indeed a "great Rock" (ch. xxxii. 2), a "strong Rock" (Ps. xxxi. 2), even "the Rock of our salvation" (Ps. lxxxix. 26).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*The help of Egypt.* A party in Judah is negotiating with Egypt; and the prophet points out the falseness of this policy.

I. IT IS A RELIANCE UPON BRUTE FORCE. "Horses" are symbolic of martial strength. And Judah, being peculiarly deficient in cavalry, was "tempted to trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen" (ch. xxxvi. 8, 9). Famed in Homer was Egyptian Thebes, with the hundred gates, and the two hundred men who issued forth from each with horses and chariots ('Iliad,' ix. 382). The memory of the pursuit of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus contained the picture of those chariots and horsemen (Exod. xiv. 6, 9). They were in request in Solomon's time (1 Kings xix. 26). Egyptian cavalry, the very nerve and sinew of war; Egypt who possesses them, the most coveted ally. "On horses will we fly, . . . on the swift will we ride," was the word of the party. Such was their "creaturely confidence." These horses were but "flesh," and "all flesh is as grass," and withers when the breath of the Eternal blows upon it. The strength of the creature is but the strength of the dependent nature; folly, then, to lean on that which is itself a leaning thing.

II. IT IS A RELIANCE UPON MAN, AND NOT UPON GOD. Here man, as usual in the Hebrew prophets, is sharply opposed to God; the dependent, the frail, the mortal, to the Self-dependent, the Strong, the Immortal and Eternal; the tool to the hand that holds it, the might that alone can render it effective. The axe, the saw, the staff: they are dead and helpless things, until they are brought into connection with spiritual force. So horses and chariots can avail naught, unless they be the instruments of the Lord of hosts, the engines of a spiritual and enduring policy in the earth. Man himself, without tools and weapons, is the most defenceless of animals; with them, yet still without God, he is in no better plight.

III. IT IS TYPICAL OF IRRELIGIOUSNESS IN GENERAL. The folly is not so much in looking to material resources and defences as in "*not* looking to the Holy One of Israel" —in "*not* consulting Jehovah." All worldliness is negative, and there lies its weakness. It is a strategy of life which defeats itself; moving far from the true base of operations, and finding itself presently cut off, without the chance of return. Again, it is a departure from the Source of true wisdom. The "wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the understanding ones"—this is *policy, prudence.* In Jehovah is a higher wisdom than that of Jewish politicians; his is wisdom united with perfect rectitude. And without reverence for him, the "fear of Jehovah," men do not partake of this higher wisdom.

IV. THE END OF EGYPTIAN HELP. In the first place, the hollowness of the Jewish policy will be exposed. The word of Jehovah has gone forth, and will not come back to him void. For it is itself spiritual *force, truth,* mightier than any material force that is known. Put into the mouth of a prophet (Jer. i. 9), those words become mighty as

fire, to devour all that stays their course as wood (Jer. v. 14). "All that the Lord speaketh *must be done*" (Numb. xxiii. 26). The wall of a worldly wisdom will bulge and suddenly fall, and the "wisdom of the wise ones" be brought to naught. The words of the Eternal are backed up by the hand of the Eternal; and, when stretched out, the "helper" who has been so much looked up to will be seen to totter, and the "helped" one be buried beneath the ruins.—J.

Vers. 4—6.—*Similes of the nature and power of Jehovah.* I. THE LION. He is pictured watching over the holy city, the "peculiar treasure," the invisible Sanctuary of the religion and the people, as a lion over its prey, in the presence of threatening shepherds.

> "As from a carcase herdsmen strive in vain
> To scare a tawny lion, hunger-pinch'd;
> Ev'n so th' Ajaces, mail-clad warriors, fail'd
> The son of Priam from the corse to scare."
>
> ('Iliad,' xviii. 161.)

It is a fine image—found twice in Homer—of the undaunted prowess of the bold and steadfast warrior. Invincible towards his foes, what is Jehovah towards his friends, the people of his choice and love?

II. THE BIRD. Infinite tenderness mingles with irresistible might in the nature of God. It is no narrow view of the Divine attributes which the Bible gives. All that we see of nobility in living creatures, all traits of courage and of love, may be borrowed to enrich our representations of that nature which includes all other nature within its scope and grasp. Thus the magnificent queen of birds, no less than the magnificent king of beasts, supplies in its actions and habits a parable of eternal providence. The eagle fluttering over her young, spreading her wide wings and bearing them thereon, was a type of Jehovah's conduct to his people in the desert (Deut. xxxii. 10). So does he now hover over the city, protecting, rescuing. Nor was it otherwise in the days of the Saviour, who employs also the simile of the maternal bird. Every ideal of lion-hearted hero, of father, strong yet tender, of all-brooding mother, of living creatures inspired by mysterious and mighty instincts of love, helps to bring into momentary clearness some feature of the nature of him whose being is only "dark from excess of light." His voice, pleading with youth and innocence, with the unsophisticated conscience, says, "Come!" and with the sinner and the sophist, "Return!"—J.

Vers. 7—9.—*The fire of Jehovah.* I. "OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE." He burns from that sacred oracular centre in Jerusalem. And his foes are seen melting away before him—the Assyrian fleeing from and falling before the sword, the huge rock of his power disappearing, princes falling into panic terror as the rallying signal of Judah is raised. The briars and thorns of iniquity, all the weed-like growth of worldly ways are kindled and devoured.

II. OUR GOD IS A LIGHT OF SALVATION. "Light of Israel" goes along with "devouring fire" (ch. x. 17). To be enlightened is to know God and our relation to him. It is to know what is *not* Divine, and what is sinful, and what is worthless in reference to salvation. And so the people, having "returned," will be seen respecting their "not-gods of silver and their not-gods of gold," the sinful manufacture of godless art.

III. THERE MUST BE BOTH THE FIERY AND THE ILLUMINATING ELEMENT IN TRUE RELIGION. Enthusiasm is needed; without it we have no motive force. Evil will yield to nothing else than to the heart aflame with piety, the tongue of Heaven-kindled fire. Yet blind zeal is mischievous; and therefore the illuminated mind is needed, the discriminating intelligence. The union of intellect with piety, the white heat of zeal kindling all it touches into light-giving flame,—what can resist it?—J.

Ver. 1.—*Wrong sources of help.* "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help." Egypt is used in Scripture as a symbol of all foreign worldly powers. It represented carnal force—"trusting in chariots, horses, and horsemen, because they are very strong." "Looking," as the same verse says, "to them," and not looking unto the Holy One of Israel.

I. WOE, BECAUSE GOD HAS SAID IT. He is wise, and knows the end from the beginning. We are dazzled with the show of power. The neighing of the war-horse and the glitter of the golden chariot and the flashing steel of the warriors, all look like strength. But God says to Israel, "This is not *your* strength. This may succeed for a time, but it is an empire held by the throat, not by the heart."

II. WOE, BECAUSE WE HAVE SEEN IT. The facts of history are on our side. When Israel was pure and pious she prospered. Deliverance from Egypt was wrought out in the face of superior force; and an undisciplined band of slaves were too mighty for the cohorts of Pharaoh. So have we seen in history ever since. In the end it is "righteousness that exalteth a nation;" but shame, reproach, and defeat come to those who forsake God. Woo! Yes; the fires of London had to burn out its profligacies. The plague followed its debaucheries.

III. WOE, BECAUSE DIVINE LAWS ARE IMMUTABLE. It is not only *said* and *seen*, it is *sure*. For to find true help in Egypt would be like reversing the law of gravitation, or making the stars change their courses, or water forsake its level. "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent."

There are many Egypts—force, fashion, fraud; these have empire at times; but woe to those who, forsaking the simplicities and spiritualities of the gospel, seek "help" therefrom!—W. M. S.

Vers. 1—5.—*The arm of flesh.* How important is this subject we may gather from the fact that the prophet is inspired to return to it, and to reiterate his condemnation (see ch. xxx. 1). The disposition to lean on the arm of flesh instead of trusting in the living God is not Jewish, but human; not peculiar to any age or dispensation, but is an abiding spiritual peril. We learn here—

I. THE FALLACY WHICH IT INVOLVES. 1. The Jews were *trusting in numbers.* Looking to the horses and chariots of Egypt, "because they were many" (ver. 1). We are apt to be imposed upon by numbers, to think there is safety and even salvation in them, to indulge the notion that, because we are among a great crowd or are supported by a very large majority, we are all on the side of truth and victory. Yet nothing is more uncertain; often the vast hosts have been overthrown in conflict by the devoted and determined few; often the small section, "everywhere spoken against" and despised, has been proved to be in the right and has ultimately prevailed. If God be on one side and the mightiest multitude on the other, we may be sure that the fact that "the chariots and horses are many" will be of no account at all. Divine providence is *not* by any means necessarily or constantly "on the side of the strongest battalions." 2. They trusted in *apparent human strength.* "In horsemen, because they are very strong." Many regiments of cavalry have a very imposing aspect to the eye which looks upon and judges by the surface of things; they seem invincible, overwhelming, an invaluable ally when the enemy is approaching. And not only the well-equipped cavalry in time of war; but, in time of peace and in the ordinary life of men, the sagacious counsellor, the wealthy merchant, the influential statesman or courtier, the eloquent and admired speaker or pleader,—these men seem to have in them a source of strength on which we may build, or to which in the time of peril we may repair. But "the Egyptians were men, and not God," etc. (ver. 3); their promised word might be broken, their overtures might turn out to be selfishly made and to be unscrupulously withdrawn; their cavalry might be ridden down by troops still stronger than they. Being but men and but horses, they might prove—as they would prove—nothing better than a broken reed, which would pierce the hand that leaned on it (ch. xxxvi. 6). And the human strength on which we are all so inclined to lean will very likely prove to be nothing more or better. How often the sagacity of the prudent, the riches of the wealthy, the influence of the great, the eloquence of the orator, fail us at our hour of need, and we "go down to our house" bitterly disappointed, or perhaps stricken, stripped, ruined! "The arm of flesh will fail you."

II. THE FRUIT WHICH BELONGS TO IT. "God will not call back his words" of condemnation (ver. 2; see ch. xxx. 1—13). He is grieved and offended that his word has been disobeyed, and himself distrusted and deserted. (See homily *in loc.*)

III. THE PENALTY WHICH WILL FOLLOW IT. God will arise against both those that seek and those that offer help; at the stretching out of his hand they will both fall

together (vers. 2, 3). They who, distrusting God, put their trust in man will fall under God's high displeasure, and, according to their circumstances and the character of their error, will fall into discomfiture, into disrepute, into disappointment, into shame.

IV. THE RESOURCE WHICH IT OVERLOOKS. All the while that Judah was leaning on "that broken reed, Egypt," it had at hand a sure Support, an almighty Deliverer, One that would be as a lion for fearlessness and irresistible strength, One that would be as a mother-bird for swiftness and tenderness (vers. 4, 5), to whom it might have looked, and by whom it would have been graciously received and effectually succoured. By our side, in our time of trouble and of peril, is an almighty Friend, whose delivering hand no army can resist, who will come at the right time to redeem us, who will treat us with more than parental tenderness and care. Shall we not go unto *him*, and say, "My soul trusteth in thee, yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast" (Ps. lvii. 1) ?—C.

Ver. 2.—*Divine reservation and consistency.* "Yet he ... will bring evil, and will not call back his words." Doubtless God seems to call back his words. "The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do" (Exod. xxxii. 14; 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; Judg. ii. 18, etc.). "He heard their cry ... and repented, according to the multitude of his mercies" (Ps. cv. 44, 45). Yet, says the prophet, "he will bring evil and *not* call back his words." How explain this? The explanation of it is found in the fact that there is some necessary reservation understood, if not expressed, in the Divine promise and in the Divine threatening.

I. HIS RESERVATION AND CONSISTENCY IN PROMISE. God promises life to the obedient and the faithful; yet there are those who believe themselves, and are believed, to be among this number, whose end is destruction. Has God called back his word? No; for his promise was contingent on their steadfastness, and they have forfeited all claim on his promised word (Josh. xxiv. 20; Ps. lxxxv. 8; Ezek. xxxiii. 13; John xv. 6; Heb. vi. 4—8).

II. HIS RESERVATION AND CONSISTENCY IN THREATENING. Although God may seem to call back his words of solemn threatening, yet he "will bring evil;" he is not inconsistent with himself. 1. *God reveals his wrath against sin.* He declares that it shall not go unpunished; that the soul that sinneth shall die; that the wages of sin is death. 2. *God offers pardon.* The message of the gospel of Christ is essentially and emphatically one of Divine mercy. 3. *His mercy in Christ Jesus is large and free.* It is not grudging, half-hearted. It is not like the forgiveness we extend to one another (ch. lv. 7—9). It means a complete restoration of the estranged but reconciled child to full parental favour (Luke xv. 22, 23). Where, then, is the Divine consistency? It is found in the consideration that: 4. *His declaration of penalty was always contingent on the attitude of the sinner.* (Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15.) It is not intended to be absolute and unalterable, whatever be the future career of the guilty. Like all his promises, God's warnings are conditional. God does not call back his own words from their meaning or their fulfilment, he calls *us* back, through them, to our duty and to our right relation to himself. And, besides: 5. *He does bring evil in some serious measure.* For: (1) Previous to our penitence sin has wrought suffering, sorrow, weakness. (2) At the time of penitential return it works self-reproach, shame, anxiety. (3) Reconciliation is inevitably followed by some kind and some degree of spiritual deterioration; there is a lost power, a lessened influence, a narrowed sphere—the absolutely irremovable consequences of repeated wrong-doing and protracted ill-being.—C.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Deep disloyalty.* The children of Israel had "deeply revolted" from God by preferring Egyptian cavalry to the defence of almighty power. This preference of the human and the material to the Divine is only too common everywhere.

I. THE DISLOYAL ATTITUDE OF MANKIND TOWARDS GOD. Mankind is in revolt against the Divine rule. We have all said in our hearts, "We will not have this One to reign over us." 1. God righteously claims our allegiance—the homage of our hearts, the subjection of our will, the obedience of our life. 2. We have deliberately refused it. We have practically disallowed his claim; we have retained our power for our own enjoyment, to be spent according to our own tastes and choices. Amid various forms of iniquity there is one which is common to the race—we have all with-

held from the Divine Father of our spirits the willing and practical allegiance for which he has looked.

II. HUMAN DISLOYALTY IN ITS DEPTH. There are many degrees of rebelliousness. Only he who searches the hearts and knows the real nature of righteousness and iniquity can accurately measure them, but we can form an approximate idea. Men may be deeply disloyal by going far in the direction of (1) open and flagrant transgression—the commission of baneful vices or cruel and devastating crimes; (2) distinct and formal denial of God's existence—the avowal and advocacy of blank atheism; (3) the public denial of the Divine claims—the representation of the cardinal error that God is indifferent to the character of his human children, and does not ask for their worship or service; (4) deliberate and persistent disregard of his will as revealed in his Word—the turning a deaf ear to his inviting voice.

III. THE DIVINE SUMMONS TO RETURN. "Turn ye unto him." 1. God's message through inspired men. At sundry times God spake by the prophets. Then and thus he spoke in very clear and in very gracious tones; he said emphatically and repeatedly, "Return unto me" (see text; ch. i. 16—18; lv. 6—9; Jer. iii. 12—16; Ezek. xviii. 30—32; Hos. xiv. 1, 2, etc.). 2. God's invitation through his Son, our Saviour. (1) That the disloyal hearts of men should return to their allegiance and become the holy and rejoicing citizens of his heavenly kingdom was the very end for which Jesus came. (2) To accomplish this he lived, wrought, spoke, suffered, died. (3) This is the spirit and the scope of the message he has left behind him, and of the work in which he is now engaged. (4) The way of return through Christ is the heart's acceptance of him as its Divine Lord and Redeemer. The voice which comes from the Man of sorrows, from the ascended Lord, is "Come unto me;" "Believe in me;" "Abide in me."

IV. THE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCE OF RETURN. "In that day every man shall cast away his idols." Return to the service of Jehovah and to a sincere trust in him certainly meant the utter abandonment of idolatry. Our restoration to the favour and friendship of God in Jesus Christ must also mean the putting away of every form of idolatry; *e.g.* (1) the worship of pleasure or indulgence in any unholy or injurious gratification; (2) covetousness, "which is idolatry" (Col. iii. 5); (3) the worship of mammon, or absorption in the struggles and ambitions of this earthly life (Matt. vi. 24). (4) Such a devotion to any human object of love as leaves no room, or no sufficient room, for attention to the highest duties and the most sacred claims. It may be that not once nor twice, but again and again, the Christian man may find himself called on to "cast away his idols," to put them out of his heart, and therefore out of his life.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Fleeing away.* Here is a prophetic vision of flight, which may suggest other kinds and instances of "fleeing away." Sennacherib comes up vain-gloriously against Jerusalem, confidently reckoning on complete success, thinking to swallow up Judah as a pleasant morsel; and, behold! he is found hurrying homewards as one that is pursued by overtaking legions, not staying at his first fortification, but, in his terror and humiliation, "passing on beyond his stronghold" for fear, his princes "frightened away by the flags" of the enemy that was to have been so easily and so utterly subdued. Our thoughts may be directed to—

I. THE VANQUISHED FLEEING FROM THE VICTORIOUS. The annals of human history, which have hitherto been principally the record of human strife, are only too full of heart-rending illustrations (see, among others, Erckmann-Chatrian's 'Waterloo').

II. CRIME FLEEING FROM THE FEET OF JUSTICE. Both fact and fiction will supply abundant illustrations of the intolerable wretchedness of those who, pursued by the officers of law, are dogged by apprehension and alarm at every step they take. "Let no man talk of murderers escaping justice, and hint that Providence must sleep: there were twenty score of violent deaths in one long minute of that agony of fear."

III. WRONG FLEEING FROM REVENGE. See the vivid picture of Carker fleeing from Dombey (Dickens): "Shame, disappointment, and discomfiture gnawing at his heart, a constant apprehension of being overtaken: the same intolerable awe and dread that had come upon him in the night returned unweakened in the day: . . . rolling on and on, always postponing thought, and always racked with thinking . . . pressing on

. . . change upon change . . . long roads and dread of night . . . and still the old monotony of bells and wheels and horses' feet, *and no rest.*"

IV. GUILT FLEEING FROM THE FACE OF GOD. Guilt fleeing: 1. *Weakly and vainly.* Long before Jonah, in the hour of self-reproach that followed his act of disobedience, "fled from the presence of the Lord," men had tried to put a distance between their sin and its rightful Judge. And long since then have they tried to escape his eye and his hand. Saddest of all vain endeavours is the thrice-guilty deed of the suicide, who acts as if, by entering another world, he could flee from the face of the Omnipresent One. 2. But there is a sense in which guilt flies away from the face of God *really and most blessedly.* When God's conditions of penitence and faith have been fulfilled, then is our guilt "purged away," our transgressions are "removed from us as far as the east is from the west," our sins are "hidden from his face," they are "cast into the depths of the sea" (Ps. lxv. 3; ciii. 12; li. 9; Micah vii. 19). Moreover, we look forward to the time when there shall be a glorious fulfilment of the Divine promises, and we shall have—

V. EVIL DISAPPEARING FROM THE FACE OF MAN; when "sorrow and sighing shall flee away," when "death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire," when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away" (ch. xxxv. 10; Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 4).—C.

Ver. 1.—*Names for God.* Here the Lord, or Jehovah, is called the "Holy One of Israel." When the mysterious name "Jehovah" was given, another name, suited for more familiar use, was commended, even this, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Instructive suggestions come from placing these three names together, as representing (1) God absolute; (2) God in relations; (3) God in history.

I. "I AM" (YEHVEH); OR, GOD ABSOLUTE. 1. This name in truth involves the *namelessness* of God. It is as if he had said to Moses, "You ask for my Name. 'I am,' and that is all that you can say about me." The words are not, properly speaking, a name; they are but the assertion of a fact about God. They are a refusal of God to put all his great glory into a name. A name is the brief summing-up of a definition, and since it must ever be an impossible thing wholly to define God, he cannot permit any name to be used which shall appear to assume that a definition has been found. 2. This so-called name involves the *unity* of God. It is as if he had said, "I am, and there is none beside me." In a magnificent conception, the prophet represents Jehovah as rising up from his place, scanning the whole universe, from the infinite east to the infinite west, and then, seating himself again upon his eternal throne, saying, "There is no God beside me; I know no other." 3. This so-called name involves the *self-existence* of God. It is as if he had said, "I am, and no one made me." None gave him being. On no one has he to depend. He has life in himself. He is the very Fountain of life. And thus is declared the perfect and eternal distinction between God and all created existence. Nowhere can we find uncaused being. Everywhere are effects which can be more or less perfectly traced to their causes. In Jehovah we have effect without cause. "In the beginning God." "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." 4. This so-called name involves the *eternity* of God. It is as if he had said, "I am, and shall be for ever." It is absolutely impossible for us to conceive of the force which can stop his existence. There is no death that can touch him.

"How dread are thine eternal years,
O ever-living Lord!"

This impression of God as the Unknowable, Unseeable, August, and Awful One, our souls greatly need in these light and frivolous times. God is revealed to the soul in *awe.* A horror of great darkness fell on Abraham, and under it he saw God. Trembling agony filled the soul of wrestling Jacob, and in the awe of his conflict he heard God. We may heed the voice that says, "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth."

II. "GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB;" OR, GOD IN PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH US. We are to know what God, is by observing what he has been to his people, and what he has done for them. By calling himself thus, God represents himself as the Promise-maker and Promise-keeper. At the call of God Abraham had broken away

from his Chaldean home, and wandered forth, a sojourner in a strange land; but God was faithful to his word, and proved towards him an unchanging Friend. Guilty Jacob fled from home, and God met him, revealing himself as the faithful Watcher, willing to be in close and gracious personal relations with him. For years, while in service, God blessed his basket and his store. When journeying back to Canaan, God defended him, subdued the enmity of Esau, and gave him prosperity and honour. Few lives are offered for our study which bear such manifest traces of the nearness and providence of God. Few names could suggest so much to us as this most simple one—the God of Jacob. Still God is what he has ever been—Defence of his endangered people; Wisdom for his perplexed people; Support of his enfeebled people; Corrector of his mistaken people; Saviour of his sinning people. For all the actual needs of a tried, toiling, tempted life, we may come, even as the patriarchs did, into close personal relations with God, for "this is his Name for ever, and this is his memorial to all generations." Graves, in his work on the Pentateuch, says, "The peculiar and incommunicable character of God is self-existence; he is the great 'I Am.' But this abstract and philosophical description of the Supreme Being was not sufficiently calculated to arrest the attention, conciliate the confidence, and command the obedience of a people entirely unaccustomed to scientific speculations, and incapable of being influenced by any other than temporal motives; it was therefore necessary to represent to them the Governor of the universe in a more circumscribed and attractive form, as the God of the fathers, who had conferred the most distinguished honours on Abrabam, Isaac, and Jacob, and to whom their posterity might—from the full confidence which fact and experience supply—look up and trust as their peculiar guardian God."

III. "HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL;" OR, GOD IN HISTORY. This is the new name given to God, when his dealings with our race through many generations could be reviewed, and the character of all those dealings make due impression of the character of God himself. What one thing comes out most plainly from all reviews of God in history? The prophet says, in reply, *his holiness*. This estimate of God may be illustrated on the following lines. 1. The Holy One of Israel has ever been faithful to his covenant. 2. The Holy One of Israel has ever required the holiness of a simple and trustful obedience. 3. The Holy One of Israel has ever been swift to mark iniquity. 4. The Holy One of Israel has ever been redeeming and saving. 5. The Holy One of Israel has ever been jealous of his supreme claims. "His glory he would never give to another." So the three great names on which we have been dwelling (1) touch us with reverence and awe; (2) open our eyes to see his working all round about us; and (3) call upon us to render to him hearty trust and lowly service.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The wisdom of God in his punishments.* "Yet he also is wise." These words seem to have been spoken as an ironical parenthesis. He also, as well as the Jewish politicians. "The words vindicate to Jehovah the skill and power adequate to inflict punishment on both the contracting parties, together with veracity in carrying his threatenings into execution." "God was as wise as the Egyptians, and ought therefore to have been consulted; he was as wise as the Jews, and could therefore thwart their boasted policy." As Isaiah leads us to consider so many phases of the subject of Divine punishment, we only suggest this topic as giving a fresh point of view. We are reminded of the *wisdom*, rather than the mysteriousness, severity, or love, of the Divine judgments and chastisements. In sending calamities "God is wise." Covering the whole subject, the following divisions may be taken.

I. God's wisdom is seen in the threatenings, which act as warnings, and increase the guiltiness of the wilful.

II. God's wisdom is seen in making his threatenings conditional, so that repentance of, and forsaking, sin may be hopeful.

III. God's wisdom is seen in fulfilling threatenings, so that no wilful men may dare to presume.

IV. God's wisdom is seen in what he does for sinners themselves by his judgments.

V. God's wisdom is seen in what he does by his judgments for the spiritual training of the onlookers. "He is known by the judgments which he executeth."—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*God unhindered by fears of man.* We fear and tremble before boastful

words and a great show of force, but we may well remember that God does not. He reckons it all at its true worth, and goes on with his Divine working quite unmoved by all the rage. The figure in this verse needs careful explanation. The allusion is to the boastings and threatenings of Sennacherib. God has undertaken to defend the city of Jerusalem. As the lion will not give up his prey, so Jehovah will not allow the Assyrians to rob him of his "peculiar treasure," Jerusalem. The vast armies of the Assyrians were as nothing in the estimation of Jehovah. He viewed unperturbed their attempt to seize the locality which he had chosen as his special residence. Matthew Henry, with quaint force, says, "Whoever appear against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them, or so much as to alter his pace for them." Taking an illustration from another sphere of nature, the Divine calmness under excitement that alarms men may be illustrated by the following passage from Gosse: "There was a heavy swell from the westward, which, coming on in broadly heaving undulations, gave the idea of power indeed, but of power in repose, as when a lion crouches in his lair with sheathed talons and smoothed mane and half-closed eyes. But no sooner does each broad swell, dark and polished, come into contact with these walls and towers of solid rock, than its aspect is instantly changed. It rears itself in fury, dashes with hoarse roar, and apparently resistless might, against the opposition, breaks in a cloud of snowy foam, which hides the rocky eminence, and makes us for a moment think the sea has conquered. But the next, the baffled assailant is recoiling in a hundred cascades, or writhing and grovelling in swirls around the feet of those strong pillars which still stand in their majesty, unmoved, immovable, ready to receive and to repel the successive assaults of wave after wave with ever the same result." There is a quality or power in man, which we call in a good sense *sang-froid*—a power of keeping calm in times of excitement, which we are accustomed to admire, and which may help us to realize the figure of God given in this passage. A remarkable story is told in connection with Prince Bismarck, who is a striking example of persistent keeping on at his designs, however loud may be the howlings around him. It is said that he wears an iron ring, on which is inscribed the Russian word "Nitschewo," or "It does not matter." In the winter of 1862 he was hurriedly journeying in Russia, and in answer to various appeals to his driver, he could get nothing from him save this one word, "Nitschewo." At last the sledge was upset, and taking an iron bar which had become detached from the sledge, Bismarck, in his annoyance, thought of striking the man, but feeling he had learned a life-lesson from the frequent repetition of this word, he kept the bar, and had a ring made of it to remind him, in the worryful times of life that "it does not matter." Consider—

I. THE THINGS WHICH GOD DOES NOT HEED. They go under this heading—the boasts of the proud. Empty words. Noisy deeds. The material forces which lie at the command of men. These greatly alarm us. Let but a sound of threatening rise into the air, and we cry in our fright, "The Church is in danger!" God is not disturbed. His Church is safe; the "gates of hell shall not prevail against her." Let but the nations unite for some act of violence towards the Lord's Jerusalem, and in fright her statesmen run off to Egypt for help. Jerusalem is in no real danger—a wall of Divine guardian fire is all round about her, and God will defend his own.

II. THE THINGS WHICH GOD DOES HEED. These will go under the heading—the cry of the humble. He who is best heard by man when he speaks with a "still, small voice," best hears man when he speaks to him with a "still, small voice." Not the thunder of men's anger, but the quiet evening breeze of men's humble prayer, goes right in to the throne of God. We may learn from this figure of God's patient indifference to what seems so alarming, how we may rightly estimate opposing forces and persons who show enmity to us. Most of such forces and persons had better just be passed by, left alone. "Nitschewo"—"It does not matter." We all of us make too much of evil things and noisy oppositions. We magnify them until they fret and weary and hinder us. Would that we were more like God, who—

"Moves on his undisturbed affairs"!

R. T.

Ver. 6.—*Turning to God in giving up sin.* Connect with ver. 7. Here is indicated

one essential characteristic of a genuine conversion or reformation. Two kinds of "turning" are suggested.

I. TURNING TO GOD AS A VOICELESS SENTIMENT. Merely good sentiments, revivalistic emotions, gushing fervours, temporary excitements, have no voice that can reach to God.

II. TURNING TO GOD SPEAKING THROUGH ACTS. Putting away idols—God can hear that. He knows what that means. Giving up sins—God can hear that. Cutting off right hands—God can hear that. Plucking out right eyes—God can hear that. This is the voice for which God asks, and to which he so graciously responds. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The surprise of the Lord's deliverances.* No inhabitant of Jerusalem could have imagined how God intended to deliver the city from Sennacherib. God's way is in the sea, his footsteps are not known; but he leads his people safely like a flock. The following points will recall familiar illustrations.

I. GOD'S PROMISED DELIVERANCES ALWAYS DO COME. "If it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry." "No good thing has failed God's people of all that he has promised." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard, and saved him out of all his troubles."

II. THEY COME WHEN WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM. And therefore we are constantly urged to keep watchful and expectant. Disraeli truly remarked that "the unexpected is the thing that happens."

III. THEY COME IN WAYS THAT SEEM STRANGE. In some cases not seeming at all to be the deliverances which they really are.

IV. THE SURPRISE THEY BRING IS USUALLY FULL OF GRATITUDE AND JOY. For in most cases it is manifestly better than our thought. Then let God save us and deliver us just in his own way and time. Enough for us to wait earnestly *on* him in our prayer, and wait patiently *for* him, trustingly sure that he always has his "set time in which to favour Zion."—R. T.

SECTION VIII. A PROPHECY OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM (CH. XXXII. 1–8).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Vers. 1–8.—A PROPHECY OF MESSIAH'S KINGDOM. It is generally allowed that this prophecy is Messianic; but some critics insist that it is not so "in a narrow sense." They regard Isaiah as expecting Messiah's kingdom to follow immediately on the discomfiture of Sennacherib, and as looking to Hezekiah to inaugurate it. According to this view, Hezekiah, renovated in character, was to be the Messiah, and might have been so had he been "equal to the demands providentially made upon him." But he was not; and the task of establishing the kingdom fell to "another," at a later date. It is simpler to regard the prophet as looking for a greater than Hezekiah (comp. ch. vii. 14; ix. 6), but ignorant how soon, or how late, his coming would be.

Ver. 1.—A king . . . princes. Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne translate, "*the* king . . . *the* princes;" but the Hebrew gives no article. The announcement is vague, and corresponds to those of other prophets, as of Jeremiah (xxiii. 5), "Behold, the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and *a king* shall reign and prosper;" and of Zechariah (ix. 9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion . . . behold, thy *King* cometh unto thee." The "princes" of the text are the minor authorities whom the king would set over his kingdom—*i.e.* the apostles and their successors. **In righteousness . . . in judgment.** Messiah's rule will be a rule of strict justice and right, offering the strongest contrast to that under which the Jews have been living since the time of Jehoshaphat (see ch. i. 15—23; iii. 1—12, etc.).

Ver. 2.—A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, etc. Modern critics mostly render, "each man"—*i.e.* the king, and each of his princes. But it is, to say the least, *allowable*—with Vitringa and Kay—to regard the word as referring

to the king only (comp. Zech. vi. 12, where *ish*, a man, is used in the same vague way of One who is clearly the Messiah). There was never but *one* man who could be to other men all that is predicated in this verse of the "man" mentioned (comp. ch. xxv. 4, where nearly the same epithets are predicated of God). **A covert**; *i.e.* a protection against Divine wrath. Such is Messiah in his mediatorial character. **Rivers of water**; *i.e.* refreshing and invigorating (comp. ch. lv. 1; John iv. 14; vii. 37). **The shadow of a great rock.** At once refreshing and protecting (see ch. xxv. 4).

Ver. 3.—**The eyes of them that see shall not be dim.** In Messiah's kingdom there shall be no judicial blindness, such as that threatened in ch. vi. 9, 10, and described in ch. xxix. 10, 11; but men shall see the truth clearly (comp. ch. xxix. 18; xxxv. 5; Matt. xiii. 16, etc.). **The ears . . . shall hearken**; *i.e.* "shall both hear and *understand*" (compare "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear").

Ver. 4.—**The heart also of the rash**; *i.e.* of those who *were* rash and hasty, who would not give themselves time to understand the warnings addressed to them, or to think of the real character of their actions. These shall, in Messiah's kingdom, "have the gift of discernment to perceive things in their true nature" (Delitzsch). **The tongue of the stammerers.** The tongue of those who hitherto have spoken hesitatingly and inconsistently on moral and religious subjects shall be ready—*i.e.* prompt and eager—to speak upon them with clearness and elegance. The grace given to the uneducated fishermen of Galilee enabled them to preach and teach gospel truth, not only with clearness, but with refinement.

Ver. 5.—**The vile person shall be no more called liberal**; rather, *the foolish person* —as *nabal* is commonly translated (Deut. xxii. 6; 2 Sam. iii. 33; xiii. 13; Ps. xiv. 1; xxxix. 8; lxxiv. 22, etc.)—such a man as the "Nabal" of 1 Sam. xxv. Men are apt to confound moral distinctions, and to call the "fools" who waste their substance in feasting and revelry "generous" or "liberal," and the niggards (churls) who hoard their riches "warm men," "wealthy men," "men well to do in the world" (see ch. v. 20; and comp. Arist., 'Eth. Nic.,' ii. 8, § 3; Thucyd., iii. 82). This perversion of truth shall not obtain in Messiah's kingdom. **Bountiful**; rather, *wealthy* (comp. Job xxxiv. 19, where the same word is translated "rich").

Ver. 6.—**For the vile person will speak villany, etc.**; rather, *for the fool speaketh folly, and his heart doeth wickedness, practising profanity and uttering error against Jehovah, making empty the soul of the hungry —yea, the drink of the thirsty will he cause to fail.* The prophet seems to have the portrait of Nabal in his mind, and to take him as the type of a class.

Ver. 7.—**The instruments.** Mr. Cheyne translates, "the machinations," which gives a better sense; but the rendering is scarcely borne out by any parallel use of the term *c'li* in Scripture or elsewhere. *C'li* properly means "vessels," "weapons," "implements." **He deviseth wicked devices**; rather, *he deviseth plots.* The word "he" is emphatic. Unlike the fool, who passively does evil through thoughtlessness, the niggard actively devises crafty plans against his fellow-men. He seeks to cheat the poor out of their rights by false witness (comp. ch. i. 17, 23; iii. 14, 15; v. 28, etc.). **Even when the needy speaketh right**; *i.e.* "has right on his side." The translation in the text is to be preferred to that in the margin.

Ver. 8.—**By liberal things shall he stand**; or, *to liberal things.* The Hebrew will bear either sense.

SECTION IX. FURTHER DENUNCIATIONS OF ISRAEL, JOINED WITH PROMISES (CH. XXXII. 9—20).

Vers. 9—12.—A REBUKE OF THE WOMEN. It might seem at first sight as if we had here a detached utterance of the prophet, accidentally conjoined with the preceding passage (vers. 1—8). But vers. 15—18 furnish a link of connection between the two portions of the chapter, and make it probable that they were delivered at the same time. Mr. Cheyne supposes that the indifference of a knot of women, gathered at some little distance from the men to whom Isaiah had addressed vers. 1—8, provoked the prophet suddenly to turn to them, and speak to them in terms of warning.

Ver. 9.—**Rise up.** The "careless daughters" are sitting, or reclining upon couches, at their ease. The prophet bids them stand up, to hear a message from God (comp. Judg. iii. 10). **Ye women that are at ease**; *i.e.* "that are self-satisfied and self-complacent." The word employed has almost always a bad sense (see 2 Kings xix. 28; Job xii. 5; Ps. cxxiii. 4; Amos vi. 1; Zech. i. 15). **Hear my voice.** This clause should be attached to the first half of the verse. The order of the words in the original is, "Ye women that are at ease, rise up and hear my words; ye careless daughters, hearken unto my speech."

Ver. 10.—**Many days and years shall ye**

be troubled; rather, *in a year and days*; i.e. "in less than two years." The object of the prophet is not to fix the duration of the trouble, but to mark the time of its commencement (comp. ch. xxix. 1). **Shall ye be troubled**; rather, *shall ye tremble*, or *shudder* (so Deut. ii. 25; Ps. lxxvii. 18; xcix. 1; ch. v. 25; lxiv. 2; Jer. xxxiii. 9, etc.). **Ye careless women**; rather, *ye confident ones*. The word is different from that employed in vers. 9 and 11. **The vintage shall fail**; literally, *has failed*—"the perfect of prophetic certitude" (Cheyne). Some critics understand a literal failure, or destruction, of the vintage through the invasion of the Assyrians. Others suggest a reference to ch. v. 4—7. The vineyard of the Lord (Judah) has utterly failed to bring forth grapes—there is no ingathering—therefore destruction shall fall upon it.

Ver. 11.—**Tremble . . . be troubled.** The repetition of this verse is, as usual, emphatic. Its object is to impress those whom the prophet is addressing with the certainty of the coming judgment. **Strip you, and make you bare**; *i.e.* "bare your breasts," in preparation for the beating which is to follow (see the comment on the next verse).

Ver. 12.—**They shall lament for the teats**, etc.; rather, *they shall beat upon the breasts for the pleasant fields*, etc. (so the LXX., the Vulgate, Jarchi, Gesenius, Ewald, Maurer, Knobel, Delitzsch, and Mr. Cheyne). Dr. Kay prefers the rendering of the Authorized Version, understanding by "the teats" such "dry breasts" as Hosea speaks of (ix. 14). But nothing has been said in this place of any such affliction. **For the pleasant fields**, etc.; *i.e.* for their loss (see ver. 10).

Vers. 13—20.—A FURTHER MINGLING OF THREATS WITH COMFORTING PROMISES. The women require, like the men, to be both warned and comforted, wherefore the prophet addresses to them, as to the men in ch. xxx. and xxxi., an intermixture of threatening (vers. 13, 14) with promise (vers. 15—20).

Ver. 13.—**Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briars.** This was the punishment with which the unfruitful vineyard was threatened in ch. v. 6. It may be understood either literally or of the wickedness that would abound when the time of judgment came. **Yea, upon all the houses of joy** (comp. ch. v. 9). If Sennacherib carried off, as he declares (G. Smith, 'Eponym Canon,' p. 134), more than two hundred thousand captives from Judæa, he must have left many houses without inhabitants. The solitude begun by him was completed by the Babylonians. **The joyous city** (see ch. xxii. 2). The word used has generally the sense of unholy mirth (comp. ch. xxiii. 7; xxiv. 8; Zeph. ii. 15; iii. 11).

Ver. 14.—**The palaces shall be forsaken**; literally, *the palace*; but the word is used in a generic sense. The prophet sees in vision Jerusalem deserted by her inhabitants, the grand houses of the rich empty, the strongholds haunted by wild beasts, and the slopes of the hills fed on by sheep, and even occasionally visited by the timid and solitude-loving wild ass. The description suits well the time of the Babylonian captivity, but not any earlier period. Probably it was not revealed to the prophet how soon the condition would be reached. **The multitude of the city shall be left.** The real meaning is, as Bishop Lowth expresses it, "The populous city shall be left desolate." But the whole passage is, as Delitzsch observes, "grammatically strange, the language becoming more complicated, disjointed, and difficult, the greater the wrath and indignation of the poet." **The forts and towers**; rather, *hill and tower*, with (perhaps) a special reference to the part of Jerusalem called Ophel (2 Chron. xxvii. 3; Neh. iii. 26, etc.), the long projecting spur from the eastern hill, which points a little west of south, and separates the Kedron valley from the Tyropœon. **Shall be for dens**; literally, *for caves*; but dens for wild beasts seem to be meant (comp. ch. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14; Jer. l. 39). **For ever.** This expression must not be pressed. Hyperbole is a recognized feature of poetry written under strong excitement. **A joy of wild asses.** The wild ass is not now found nearer Palestine than Mesopotamia, or perhaps Northern Syria. It is exceedingly shy, and never approaches the habitations of men.

Ver. 15.—**Until.** The expression "until" modifies the previous "for ever," showing that the desolation was *not* always to continue. **The Spirit be poured upon us from on high.** An effluence from the Holy Spirit of God on individuals of eminence, prophets, kings, artificers, to fit them for their tasks, is recognized in many of the earlier books of Scripture, and especially in the Davidical psalms. But a general effluence of the Spirit of holiness on a nation, to produce a change of heart, seems to be first announced by Isaiah. The nearly contemporary prophecy of Joel (ii. 28, 29) is, perhaps, as wide in its scope, but limited to the prophetic gift, which is not necessarily conjoined with spiritual-mindedness or holiness of life. Isaiah, the "evangelical prophet," first teaches that the conversion of a nation is God's work, effected by the Holy Spirit, and effectual

to the entire change of the heart of a people. **And the wilderness be a fruitful field**; *i.e.* "the community long cursed with barrenness of good works" (ver. 10) "becomes once more fruitful of them." **And the fruitful field be counted for a forest.** An order of climax seems to be here intended. The *midbar*, the bare pasturage-ground, becomes a Carmel, *i.e.* carefully cultivated; the Carmel becomes like Lebanon, a rich and luxurious forest. There is no close parallel between this verse and ver. 17 of ch. xxix. The prophet is not tied down by his previous metaphors.

Ver. 16.—**Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness.** In all parts of the kingdom of Christ, the lowest as well as the highest, "judgment" and "righteousness" shall prevail (comp. ver. 1).

Ver. 17.—**The work of righteousness shall be peace.** Peace—a true peace, not a false one (Jer. vi. 14)—shall be the result of the reign of righteousness. War, quarrels, enmity, hostile feelings, are all of them the fruit of unrighteousness. In the kingdom of the Messiah, just so far forth as it is thoroughly established, "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jas. iii. 18). **The effect of righteousness**; literally, *the service of righteousness*, which perhaps means here "the wages of righteousness." **Quietness and assurance**; or, *quietness and confidence* (comp. ch. xxx. 15). The final happiness of the blessed in Christ's kingdom is always spoken of as a state of "rest and quietness" (see Ps. xcv. 11; Job iii. 17; Jer. vi. 16; Matt. xi. 28; Heb. iv. 9—11, etc.). The "confidence" felt would be an assured confidence, not a rash and foolish one, like that of the women of vers. 10, 11.

Ver. 19.—**When it shall hail, coming down on the forest**; rather, *but it shall hail in the coming down* (i.e. the destruction) *of the forest.* "The forest" has commonly been regarded as Assyria, on the strength of ch. x. 18, 19, 33, 34. Mr. Cheyne, however, suggests Judah, or the high and haughty ones of Judah, whose destruction was a necessary preliminary to the establishment of Christ's kingdom. May not God's enemies generally be meant? **The city.** Nineveh (Lowth, Gesenius, Rosenmüller); Jerusalem (Delitzsch, Knobel, Cheyne, Kay); "the city in which the hostility of the world to Jehovah will, in the latter days, be centralized" (Drechsler, Nagel)—the "world-power," in fact. The last view seems to give the best sense.

Ver. 20.—**Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.** The idyllic picture, begun in ver. 15, terminates here. The people of the kingdom have a well-watered land (ch. xxx. 25), where they live peacefully, sowing their seed beside the water-courses, and having abundant pasture for their peaceful beasts—the ox and the ass (comp. ch. xxx. 24). A spiritual meaning doubtless underlies the literal sense.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*Strict justice a characteristic of Messiah's kingdom.* Whatever may be said, and said with truth, of the Divine mercy, still there is no quality more characteristic of God's rule over man than his justice. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right*?" (Gen. xviii. 25); "God is a *righteous* Judge" (Ps. vii. 11); "He shall judge the world *in righteousness*, and minister judgment to the people *in uprightness*" (Ps. ix. 8). If this were not so, the whole foundations of morality would fall. And Messiah's rule was to be like God's—was, in very truth, to be God's. It had, therefore, to be strictly just. What is most wonderful in that marvellous scheme of salvation, which infinite wisdom conceived and decreed from everlasting, is that in it a way was contrived whereby "mercy and truth" might "meet together," and "righteousness and peace kiss each other" (Ps. lxxxv. 10). Attributes of God, seemingly contradictory, obtained a wondrous reconciliation by means of the sacrifice of Christ, which, though its whole import may transcend our faculties, was beyond all doubt an integer in the equation wherein mercy and truth met together, and reconcilement was made between "the wrath of man" and "the righteousness of God." The justice of Messiah's kingdom was shown—

I. IN CHRIST'S SEVERE CONDEMNATION OF EVERY FORM OF MORAL EVIL. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matt. xxiii. 13); "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 23); "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 36); "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts . . . and these defile a man" (Matt. xv. 19, 20). Christ made no compromise with sin. In his most signal act of mercy his words were, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and *sin no more*" (John viii. 11).

II. IN THE STRICT DISCIPLINE AT FIRST ESTABLISHED IN HIS CHURCH. "Purge out . . . the old leaven" (1 Cor. v. 7); "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. v. 13); "Now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat" (1 Cor. v. 11). The apostles "delivered to Satan" those who sinned grievously (1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. i. 20)—cut them off from the communion of the faithful (Gal. v. 12), and only restored them after confession and penance. "The *princes* ruled *in judgment*" (ch. xxxii. 1).

III. IN THE SOLEMN DECLARATIONS MADE OF A FINAL JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO WORKS. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Rev. xx. 12, 13; comp. Matt. vii. 23; xii. 37; xiii. 39—43; xxv. 31—46, etc.).

Ver. 2.—*What Christ is to his people.* The prophet enumerates (in ver. 2) some of the chief relations in which Messiah, when he came, would stand to his people. All his announcements are fulfilled in Christ.

I. CHRIST IS A HIDING-PLACE FROM THE WIND. When the winds of affliction blow, when "the blast of the terrible ones" is upon us, above all, when the breath of the wrath of God seems to sweep down on us and scorch us up, there is one Refuge only to which we can flee—one "Hiding-place"—Christ. In the time of natural grief and trouble, he lets us find a Refuge in him; when our enemies threaten, he "hides us in the secret of his presence from the pride of man," and "keeps us secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps. xxxi. 20); when we shrink from the thought of God's wrath, and the breath which is "like a stream of brimstone" (ch. xxx. 33), he offers himself to us as our Shelter. How many saints have not found comfort, unspeakable comfort, in the blessed words—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me *hide* myself in Thee"?

II. CHRIST IS A COVERT FROM THE TEMPEST. Christ not only hides us away from wind and storm, tempest and evil of all kinds, but is himself our Coverture. He is "a Tabernacle for a Covert from storm and from rain" (ch. iv. 6). His merits "cover up" our sins, and make atonement for them. His righteousness is the "white raiment" which clothes us, so that "the shame of our nakedness doth not appear" (Rev. iii. 18).

III. CHRIST IS AS RIVERS OF WATER. Rivers give refreshment. They are the great source of life, fertility, delight, in a parched and desert land. In the wilderness of this life, in the dry arid waste which our tired feet have to traverse, any refreshment that we enjoy comes from Christ—is Christ. He pours upon us the refreshing "dew of his blessing." He gives us to drink out of himself; and then "out of our belly there flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37, 38). The water that he imparts to us is "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14). He is unto us "a place of broad rivers and streams" (ch. xxxiii. 21), refreshing, life-giving, exhaustless.

IV. CHRIST IS AS THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND. The world is "a weary land." We are travellers across its waste. A hot sun beats down upon our heads; a scorching soil is under our feet. But we have a Rock with us—a Rock which "follows us"—and "that Rock is Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). In the shadow of that Rock we may at any time, and at all times, find rest, renovation, refreshment, protection, delight. The traveller in the desert comes, once and again, upon "a great rock," as he plods his weary way over the vast solitude, and rejoices at the sight, and toils for hours to reach the blessed refuge of its shade. Our "Rock" is ready to give us shade whenever we please—it is near us constantly; we have but to flee to it, to cling to it, to remain in its shadow.

Vers. 9—12.—*The need of rousing women in critical times from a state of self-satisfaction and self-complacency.* Women are less apprehensive than men, more inclined

to suppose that the state of things to which they are accustomed will, as a matter of course, remain unchanged. They have, as a general rule, less historical knowledge than men, and less acquaintance with the condition of the world wherein they live. The self-complacency and unsuspiciousness of Marie Antoinette and the ladies of her court, when the French Revolution was drawing on, has been a matter of surprise to historians; but it is merely a striking instance of what is, in fact, the ordinary condition of things when great changes are imminent. Jezebel did not expect, or appreciate, the revolution initiated by Jehu; nor Athaliah that carried out under the auspices of Jehoiada the high priest (2 Kings xi. 4—16). The instinctive belief in "continuance," of which Bishop Butler speaks ('Analogy,' part i. ch. i.), whereby we expect "all things to continue as we experience they are, in all respects," and "to-morrow to be as to-day," only perhaps "more abundant" (ch. lvi. 12),—is especially strong in women, and explains their inapprehensiveness. The result is: 1. That reverses come upon them suddenly and unexpectedly, without their being prepared to encounter them, and are thus sorer trials, under which they often fall into despair and recklessness, to their great hurt. 2. That the men, who are their associates, through the contagion of their security, are rendered themselves less apprehensive, and consequently less inclined to realize the coming danger and guard against it by wise measures of precaution. Under these circumstances, it becomes the preacher's duty at such times to address himself especially to the rousing of the women from their "carelessness" and security, both for their own sakes, and still more for the sake of the community, whose prosperity or whose very existence they imperil.

Vers. 15—17.—*The fruits of the Spirit in a community.* The first result of the effluence of the Holy Spirit on man is fruitfulness: "the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field a forest." The dry ground of a stony heart is changed into a cultivated garden, which "brings forth much fruit." The heart which already bore some fruit is "purged, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John xv. 2). Then, when individuals have been thus changed and "purged" and perfected one by one, judgment and righteousness "dwell" in the land—the King "reigns in righteousness," and his "princes rule in judgment;" far and wide there is a reign of justice, right, equity. Next comes a further consequence. "The work of righteousness is peace," peace subjective and objective, in the heart and in the life—the peace of quiet consciences assured of God's favour, knowing that their sins are atoned for, and feeling that they are at one with God; and the peace of internal concord and agreement among all members of the community, mutual respect of class towards class, and of man towards man, general good will of all towards all, kindliness, courtesy, ready aid, sympathy, consideration. The complete result has not been seen as yet, because men have resisted God's Spirit, and the copious outpouring of it, which he is willing to give, has never yet been given. But if this impediment were removed, if God's Spirit had free course, and a kingdom or society of perfectly virtuous men were once formed, then we should see such further consequences as are pointed out by Bishop Butler in his 'Analogy:' "In such a state there would be no such thing as faction; but men of the greatest capacity would, of course, all along have the chief direction of affairs willingly yielded to them; and they would share it among themselves without envy. Each of these would have the part assigned him to which his genius was peculiarly adapted; and others, who had not any distinguished genius, would be safe, and think themselves very happy, by being under the protection and guidance of those who had. Public determinations would really be the result of the united wisdom of the community; and they would be faithfully executed by the united strength of it. Some would in a higher way contribute, but all would in some way contribute, to the public prosperity; and in it, each would enjoy the fruits of his own virtue. And as injustice, whether by fraud or force, would be unknown among themselves, so they would be sufficiently secured from it in their neighbours. For cunning and false self-interest, confederacies in injustice, ever slight, and accompanied with faction and intestine treachery,—these, on one hand, would be found mere childish folly and weakness, when set in opposition against wisdom, public spirit, union inviolable, and fidelity on the other; allowing both a sufficient length of years to try their force. Add the general influence, which such a kingdom would have over the face of the earth, by way of example particularly, and the reverence which would

be paid it. It would plainly be superior to all others, and the world must gradually come under its empire; not by means of lawless violence, but partly by what must be allowed to be just conquest, and partly by other kingdoms submitting themselves voluntarily to it, throughout a course of ages, and claiming its protection, one after another, in successive exigencies. The head of it would be a universal monarch, in another sense than any mortal has as yet been; and the Eastern style would be literally applicable to him, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him" (part i. ch. iii. § 5).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*An ideal of political good.* When the Divine Spirit has been outpoured, when the idols have been cast away, and the Assyrian yoke has been cast off, happy days will dawn.

I. ROYALTY WILL BE SYNONYMOUS WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. The King will be seen in his beauty—not the splendour of purple robes and lofty throne and brilliant court, but that of the equity and justice which imitate Heaven. God will call him by his name, will make him rich with hidden possessions, will go before him to make the crooked ways straight (ch. xlv. 1—4). In spite of all the failings of kings, the mass of the people bear a deep reverence and affection to royalty. Even in the counterfeit they recognize some relation to the real thing. "A divinity doth hedge a king;" this is not only poetically, but religiously true, if the king in any sort answer to the truth of his position. In happier days he will so answer.

II. THE UPPER CLASSES WILL BE THE SPIRITUAL SUPERIORS OF THE PEOPLE. Aristocracy began with personal worth, and by it only can be maintained. We see from the description what the nobility ought to be in relation to the people. *Patrons, protectors;* "hiding-places from the wind," a "covert from the rain-storm, rivulets in a parched land, the shadow of a huge cliff in a thirsty land." *Noblesse oblige.* They should be looked up to; every popular cause should find in them its defenders and active advocates; every philanthropic scheme in them its leaders; every misery of the poor in them its zealous redressers. High place without high qualities is a mockery; lofty station coupled with low manners, a scandal and an abuse. Alas! too often in the history of the "ruling classes" these truths have been forgotten, these relations have been reversed. Again and again God has called them to judgment: "You have eaten up the vineyards, the plunder of the afflicted is in your houses. What mean ye that crush my people, and grind the face of the afflicted?" Notably so at the time of the great French Revolution.

III. THE RESULTS OF A SPIRITUAL CHANGE. No reformation of manners, no happy reconciliation of class with class can come about, except by a change of mind and heart. And that change itself can only come whence all changes in the realm of nature and spirit come—from the creative, the re-creative energy of God. The body is the organ of the spirit in its manifold activities. Any fresh sensibility of the physical organs is typical, therefore, of an awakened and living conscience. The *closed eye* is typical of the blindness of those who will not see. To shut the eye to evil, to turn the head away from what disgusts,—this may seem for a time equivalent to cancelling the evil itself. Not so; and reformation sets in from that hour when men are willing to face the most painful facts, to let the light into the darkest corners of existence. *Ears* were made to listen, not to be stopped. Let the bitter cry be hearkened to; its tones thrill through every fibre of our sympathetic being; nor let its pleading be dismissed until the question, *What can I do?* has found *some* distinct answer. The tongue was made, not to stammer, but to flow with truthful and gracious speech. Silence may mean that we have no help to offer; stuttering accents that we are of a divided mind, of obscure habits of thought. Lucidity is what we need—the lucidity of the single eye, the sensitive organism filled through and through with light. And what does our haste and feverish precipitation signify, but want of that deliberate forethought and that circumspection which is a constant duty? "The heart of the hasty shall perceive distinctly." Although we cannot refer all sin, like Socrates, to want of insight, yet no sin but implies that want. God's deepest, most far-reaching blessings must ever be for the *heart*, in that large sense in

which Scripture uses the word—including every mental faculty or activity. Material improvements are not to be neglected. The sanity and weal of the body have a direct bearing on the weal of mind; yet, on the other hand, there will be no material improvements until the improving mind has been awakened and truly educated.

IV. THE CONSTITUTION OF THINGS NEEDING REFORMATION. It is a *confusion* which needs to be removed. It is a world turned upside down which needs to be righted. The *fool* and the *knave* may designate the ruling classes of the time. *Fool!* how weighty the condemnation, how deep-burning the brand, which belongs to the use of the word in Scripture! The world may call him *par excellence* the fool who minds all business but his own; the prophet calls him the fool who thinks of self, but forgets his God. The sinner, in short, is the fool. His is the worst and least excusable ignorance. He may be called "noble" in the convention of society, he is contemptible in the judgment of God. The characteristics of the fool are that he speaks folly, and this "out of the abundance" of a wicked heart—a forge and workshop where the production of evil is ever going on; that he delights to propagate heresy and atheism as a centre of religious darkness. Hungry souls look to those Nabals, and are not fed, but deprived of their sustenance; and the waters they point out prove to be as the mirage of the desert on near approach. The denunciation of such spurious leaders of the people reminds of Milton's invective—

> "The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed;
> But, swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw,
> Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread."

And the *knave*, with his crafty plots and machinations, his insidious lies, drawing into his net the defenceless, honest poor. The age sorely needed true nobles, not of title and rank, but of God's own mint and stamp—men of principle; men as long-headed in their good devices as the others in evil; men of firm and constant heart; no time-serving, truckling, tide-waiting, opportunist, wavering spirits; but steady to their convictions, direct in their aims, consistent with themselves. Every time needs such men. God preserve to us the nobility of the land—the kind hearts that are worth more than coronets, the simple faith that is worth more than Norman blood; the holy seed, the vital element of a nation.—J.

Vers. 9—20.—"*Until the Spirit be poured out.*" How constantly does Scripture speak of every happy reformation as due to the "outpouring of the Spirit," or the sending or breathing of the Spirit on human-kind! Language none the less expressive because mysterious. Those epochs cannot be forecast: no meteorology can explain to us these movements "from on high." But they may be waited for and prepared for, without fear of disappointment. Again and again they had come to the prophet's heart; and from his heart he knew they must some time come also in a wider sphere of operation.

I. UNTIL THEN—WHAT? The women are addressed, the daughters of Zion. The manners of the women must be a sure index of the state of a nation. New religious feeling kindles quickly in their hearts; they welcome and further revivals. Their indifference to spiritual things seems to belie their nature; atheism in woman is monstrous. The Jewish women are in a state of *careless unconcern*. This attitude of "ease," of apathetic *nonchalance*, arouses the indignation and the alarm of the prophets, perhaps more than vivacity in sin. It is an ominous symptom in the bodily life, not less so in the soul. It offers a dull prosaic resistance to enthusiasm of any kind, which it holds in smiling, sensuous contempt. A psalmist's soul is "exceedingly filled" with perturbation at this attitude (Ps. cxxiii. 4); Amos denounces woe (vi. 1), and Zechariah the great displeasure of Jehovah against them that "are at ease." Perhaps the vintage-harvest was over when the prophet spoke. The time would come when a shudder would pass through those luxurious frames; the outer garment would be torn off, the sackcloth assumed, the breasts that once heaved only with the sigh of pleasure be beaten in wild lament for the "days that are no more," for the pleasant fields and the fruitful vine. Those fields will be thorn and briar overgrown; the houses of the city deserted, its mirth quelled. The wild cattle will sport around the temple hill, the palaces be forsaken. Impossible to dissociate in our minds the desolation of

once populous scenes from the sin of man and the withdrawal of the gracious Spirit of God. Take these descriptions as figures of the state of the soul; then power and beauty remain. The well-kept garden, the sweet fields in the harvest-time, the mirth of reapers and in-gatherers; these sights, these sounds, provide unsought expression for the soul that feels itself "at ease." The untilled fields, the signs of wild nature creeping to old ascendency over the works of man,—such sights carry symbolic meaning which depresses the most cheerful heart. "Until the Spirit be outpoured from on high"—that is our state, and that it must remain.

II. AFTER THEN—WHAT? 1. "*Justice shall inhabit the pasture-country, and righteousness shall dwell in the garden-land.*" "Men ought not to be like cattle, which seek nothing but plenty of food and abundance of outward things. We should not, like hogs in a sty, judge of the happiness of life by abundance of bread and wine" (Calvin). Righteousness alone exalts, righteousness alone can uplift a fallen nation. 2. "*The fruit of righteousness shall be peace.*" This is inwardly and outwardly, subjectively and objectively, true. Peace in the heart is the companion of rectitude; it flows from right order in the home and family, and from just administration in the state. *Peace, quietness, confidence:* a triple blooming in one; a threefold band of prosperity and condition of all welfare. "Homes of peace, dwellings of confidence, easeful resting-places,—these are the pictures that all men draw in fancy; this the life for which they dream they were made. Such a state depends upon piety, upon personal and social morality. "It is as true now as it was in the time of Isaiah. True religion would put an end to strifes and litigations; to riots and mobs; to oppressions and tumults; to alarms and robbery; to battle and murder and conflict among the nations." 3. *These blessings cannot come without suffering.* The hail of judgment will fall upon forest and upon city. The refuge of lies and the hiding-place of falsehood must be swept away. Renewing and reforming forces work destructively on one side, as creatively on the other. Upon whom these judgments will fall is not evident from the text. Hail is an image of Divine judgment (ch. xxviii. 2, 17; xxx. 30). 4. *The happiness of the tiller.* He sows beside all waters—a reference to the Oriental custom of casting the seed upon the waters of overflowing streams and rivers, so that, when the waters subside, it will be found again in the springing crop and the abundant harvest. The ox and the ass are employed to tread the moistened earth and prepare for the sowing (cf. Eccles. xi. 1, 6). In a figurative sense—happy those who go steadily on with useful work, the work that lies nearest them, the sowing which looks for a "far-off interest of good," amidst the most troubled times. No troubles of the time should divert us from our daily task, or unsettle us from the habit of continuous useful labour.—J.

Ver. 2.—*The soul's rest.* "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This is an Eastern picture. God is described as our *Shade.* In the glare of a too-garish day we become endangered; the sun of prosperity smites us. Sunlight has its penalties as well as its pleasures. So has success! The human heart cannot bear too much of brightness. We need shadows for the *mind* to rest under as well as for the body.

I. A MAN IS HERE DESCRIBED. The God-Man. One who, knowing our infirmities and temptations, is able to succour them that are tempted. The true King who is to reign in righteousness is prophesied of. "A man shall be." Christ has been the Refuge and the Rest of hearts wearied of the world and scorched with its radiant beams. We are led to Christ. Not to theological systems; not to human creeds; but to Christ. The shadow! Yes. Shadow of a cross, where we may find forgiveness and peace. Shadow of brotherhood, where we may find true sympathy in our hours of loneliness and disappointment. Shadow, where we may recline and rest as the patriarch did under the oaks of Beersheba, and Moses did under the mountains of old. And Christ's Divinity is proclaimed in the words, "a *great* Rock." High as heaven, having its roots in God's own eternal years. So great that it offers shelter for all the weary hearts of men.

II. A PILGRIMAGE IS HERE IMPLIED. "A weary land." The pilgrims are passing on through the scorching heat, the camel-drivers walking then, as they do now, in the shadow cast by these "ships of the desert." Before them stretch miles on miles of burning sand. The blinding sun is above them. With their white cummerbunds and their light Eastern dress, they ease the heat-burden all they can. And now the

great mountains come in sight. Some with gentle acclivities and some with sharp-cut rocks jutting out above the pilgrim-way. What blessed shadows *they* cast! Such shady places are our sabbaths and sacraments and sanctuaries, our holy moments of Divine fellowship, when God comes near and casts over us the protecting shadow of his gracious presence.

III. WEARINESS IS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WAY. "A weary land." We are often tired. How many hearts have said, "O God, I am a-weary!" and then, instead of the sad cry, "O God, that I were dead!" we hear the voices of spiritual souls crying, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" and the blessed answer comes from the lips of the incarnate God himself, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—weary with the load of sin; weary with the care and fret of daily life; weary with inward conflicts; weary with ceaseless watching, for our Arab enemies dash suddenly by, and point their rifle as they fly. Pain makes us weary. The loss of dear, true-hearted friends makes us weary. Doubt, with all our dark mental conflicts—doubt, which is sometimes the exquisite action of a sincere mind, makes us weary. So we come to the great Father, and rest in the gracious answer to the cry, "Lord, show us the Father," in the revelation vouchsafed unto us by our Divine Lord, who has taught us when we pray to say, "Our Father," and also has declared, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."—W. M. S.

Ver. 2.—*Refuge in Christ and in one another.* In this country we can hardly hope to feel all the force and beauty of this illustration. To do that we must have visited tropical regions. There, with the rays of the sun shining directly down, the heat becomes so intense and intolerable that it cannot be endured, and often "the shadow of a great rock" means, not merely refreshment, but salvation. And as with the heat, so with the storm—the whirlwind, the tempest, the simoom: what desolations do not these produce? what terrors do they not excite? How precious in such lands, on such occasions, the hiding-place from the wind, the covert from the storm! But lifting our thoughts from the illustration to the thing itself which is pictured here, to that human heart and life of which all visible nature only supplies the types and hints, we make no abatement for change of scene; for the scorching rays of temptation fall as fiercely and the winds of passion blow as furiously in England as in Judæa, or in Babylon, or in India. Indeed, such are the confusions and complications of our time, so subtle and so seductive are the temptations to err from the straight line of rectitude, that *more rather than less* is there need for a hiding-place for the heart, a covert from the storm of sorrow and of sin. *A man* shall be for a hiding-place! One man in particular? or any man at any time in any land? In both senses the words may be taken. We may consider—

I. CHRIST THE REFUGE OF THE HUMAN SOUL. 1. *Such he was in the days of his flesh.* For his disciples had to share something of the enmity and opposition he encountered, and they always found an effectual shield in his protection. As evangelists they brought their success and their disappointment to him, that the one might be sanctified and the other be relieved (Luke x. 17—20). When worsted by the enemy, they fell back on his power and found defeat swallowed up in victory (Matt. xvii. 14—20). When imminent danger threatened their lives, they made their appeal to his all-controlling voice (Matt. viii. 23—27). 2. *Such he became,* in a deeper sense, *after his ascension.* It *was* expedient that he should go away. "Before his departure he was *with* them, afterwards he was *in* them." The death and the resurrection of the Lord enlightened their minds and changed their spirits. Then they went to him as they never could have done during his presence; they trusted in him, gave themselves to him, leaned on him, were lost in him, as they would not have been: he became, in a deeper and fuller sense, the Hiding-place of their hearts. 3. *Such is he now to all believing hearts.* (1) As sinners, burdened with a sense of guilt and craving mercy and reconciliation, we want some other refuge than we can find in the best and wisest of mankind; and with what glad eagerness, with what profound thankfulness, with what inexpressible relief, do we resort to him, and cry—

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee"!

(2) As the children of sorrow, we have need of more than human help! There are depths of disappointment, extremities of loss, intensities of pain and suffering, wastes of loneliness, gulfs of darkness and woe, for which human sympathy is entirely inadequate, in which the only thing we can do is to hasten to that Son of man who is touched most keenly with the feeling of our trials, and say—

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly!"

II. THE REFUGE WE MAY BE TO ONE ANOTHER. *Any* man *may* be, and *every* man should *seek* to be, a hiding-place, a covert. Our domestic life shows us how this may be, and provides the first instance and best picture of human shelter. Our social life should provide us with many opportunities of succouring the needy and the tried. Our Church life should do the same; every Christian Church should be an asylum for the poor, the weak, the sad, the anxious-minded, the troubled of heart. Who would not like so to live, with such quick and ready sympathy of spirit, with such kindliness and hopefulness of word, with such friendliness of uplifting hand and sustaining arm, that his life should be suggestive of the words, "A man shall be a hiding-place"?—C.

Vers. 3, 4.—*Disabled and restored.* The words are suggestive of the spiritual incapacity of which Israel was too often guilty (see Ezek. xii. 2), and of the recovery which, in better days, they were to experience.

I. MAN DISABLED BY SIN. There are four directions in which we suffer sad deterioration and incapacity as the consequence of our sin. 1. *Spiritual perception.* After some transgressions, after continued disobedience and estrangement from God, we fail to "see light in his light;" our vision of his truth is less clear and full; sacred truths lose their true proportions in our view. Then come positive error, actual misconception, moral blindness; and finally comes that terrible mental distortion of which the Master spoke so sorrowfully and the prophet wrote so strongly (Matt. vi. 22, 23; ch. v. 20). 2. *Recognition of the Divine voice.* The commission of sin ends in, first, a partial, and ultimately a complete, spiritual deafness. At first the quieter and more habitual tones in which God is speaking to us (daily loving-kindnesses, sabbath privileges, etc.) become inaudible to us, convey no message to us from God; then more distinct and unmistakable voices from heaven are unheeded and unheard; at last, the loudest demands which God ever makes fail to produce any impression on the ear of the soul. 3. *The choice of that which is wise.* The rash heart (of the text) is the heart which chooses precipitately, and therefore foolishly. Under the dominion of sin we come to choose the visible in preference to the invisible, the material to the spiritual, the transient to the abiding, the human to the Divine. 4. *The utterance of Divine truth.* The clouded vision naturally leads to the "stammering tongue." As man becomes more affected by the sin which dwells within and works upon him, he utters God's truth less plainly, less faithfully, more partially, with ever-widening divergence from the mind of the Eternal.

II. THE TOUCH OF DIVINE POWER. When man has become disabled there is no hope for him but in God. Human teaching is valuable enough, but it does not avail. Only the awakening, reviving touch of the Divine power, brought into immediate contact with the soul, can call back these slumbering powers. But it can and does; God's renewing Spirit breaks upon the disabled mind, upon the degenerate nature, and that which was lost is regained; the faculties of the soul revive. Then we have—

III. SPIRITUAL RESTORATION. Revived by the power of God: 1. *We see clearly.* We apprehend the will of God in Jesus Christ concerning us, the excellency of his service, the beauties of holiness, the luxury of usefulness. 2. *We hear distinctly* the voice of God as he speaks to us in his Word, in his providence, in the privileges of the Christian Church. 3. *We choose wisely.* We become thoughtful, reflective, studious of the Divine desire, obedient, and therefore wise; we "understand knowledge." 4. *We speak plainly.* Discerning that which is acceptable in the sight of the Lord, we speak simply, faithfully, fearlessly, "with all boldness as we ought to speak," "the everlasting gospel"—both the elementary truths which make wise unto salvation, and those "deeper things of God," which enrich the mind and sanctify the spirit.—C.

Vers. 5—8.—*A mark of good government, etc.* Three lines of thought are here laid down. We have—

I. A MARK OF GOOD GOVERNMENT. The displacement of the unworthy and the elevation of the good and wise. Under the reign of the righteous King (ver. 1) the "fool will no longer be called a nobleman," the man of mean character but lofty rank will be made to know his true place in the commonwealth; on the other hand, the man who has in him the qualities of nobility (ver. 8) shall have the opportunity of dealing graciously and bountifully. There is no surer sign of demoralization, no more certain indication of approaching ruin in any community, than the promotion of the unfit and the unworthy; and there is no healthier symptom than the advancement of the upright and the capable. Let nations, societies, Churches, look to it.

II. A HINT AS TO SIN'S LARGE DIMENSIONS. 1. *Its tenacity of purpose.* "The vile person will [continue to] speak villany, and his heart [to] work iniquity" (ver. 6). You may put him in a position in which you might hope that the commonest self-respect would ensure propriety of conduct, but you will be mistaken; the corrupt tree will bear evil fruit on any soil. 2. *Its guilefulness.* "To practise hypocrisy;" professing justice and purity, it enacts all that is unfair and evil. 3. *Its falsity.* "To utter error," etc. Sin, especially when found in high places, is most mischievous in that it scatters everywhere the fruitful seeds of error; it poisons the mind with misleading fancies, with shallow notions which may sound well but are essentially false and which conduct to wrong and ruin. Thus it leads men to act "against the Lord," for they pursue a path which he has forbidden, and they diffuse principles which are hostile to his reign. 4. *Its heartlessness.* (Ver. 6.) What though the issue of those evil actions be that men's hearts are hungry and their souls athirst; what though they bring about impoverishment, destitution—bodily or spiritual, or both together,—let the cup be drained, let the game be played out! 5. *Its unscrupulousness.* Its "instruments are evil" (ver. 7). 6. *Its effrontery.* (Ver. 7.) They whom it is wronging may be *the poor*, and therefore the appropriate objects of compassion; they may be the *innocent*, those who are in the *right*, and therefore the proper objects of regard; nothing but downright falsehood may suffice to prevail against them (Ahab and Naboth). No matter; let the case be established, let sentence be executed!

III. A COMMENDATION OF GENEROSITY. "The liberal deviseth liberal things," etc. (ver. 8). 1. A man of a noble nature will find opportunities for doing generous things. How well a man serves the Church or the world is not a question of circumstance half so much as a matter of character. Given a free, generous, open-hearted man, and you may confidently reckon on repeated and continuous acts of unselfish usefulness. Jesus "went about doing good, for God was with him," and because God was *in* him; because, *in* him, as in a perennial fountain, dwelt Divine love, pity, self-sacrifice. We need care comparatively little about arranging opportunities of service, though that is not a matter of indifference; what is of supreme consequence is that those we teach and train should have planted *within them* the sacred seeds of holy, Christian generosity. 2. Generous measures will give a noble heart stability: by them "he shall stand." (1) They will commend him to the affection and the support of the direct recipients of his goodness (Job. xxix. 11—13). (2) They will result in general prosperity (Prov. xi. 24; Luke vi. 38; 2 Cor. ix. 6). (3) They will command the blessing of God (Ps. xli. 1; cxii. 9; Luke vi. 35; Heb. xiii. 16).—C.

Vers. 17, 18.—"*The peaceable fruit of righteousness.*" Righteousness and peace may be supposed to be entirely separate things; by those who look only on the surface they may even be imagined to be opposed to one another. In fact, they are closely and even vitally related to each other.

I. THOSE WHO ARE INCAPABLE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE UNRECEPTIVE OF PEACE. To them peace is simply incommunicable; it does not come within the range of their faculties. The horse, the swallow, the salmon, the unintelligent and irresponsible animal, may have quietude and comfort, but it cannot enjoy *peace*, in the fullest and truest sense in which we use that word. It is only capable of that sense of satisfaction which attends a perfect adjustment of its circumstances to its bodily nature; but *that* is not *peace*. Peace is that spiritual contentment which results from inward as well as outward harmony—from a sense of rectitude, a consciousness that everything is *right*

in its most important, most sacred relationships. They who are beneath the sense of responsibility, and are therefore incapable of righteousness, can never possibly attain to the possession of peace; they are constitutionally below it.

II. THEY WHO HAVE LOST RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST REGAIN IT BEFORE THEY CAN HAVE THE HERITAGE OF PEACE. 1. *This is so with the community.* When the country, or the company, or the Church has fallen into disorder because it has fallen into error and the commission of wrong, there is but one way to regain the harmony which has been lost. Absolutism will never yield it. Force will not secure it. Compromise will not permanently restore it. Nothing will avail until righteousness is re-established. Justice must be done to those to whom it has been denied. Rights must be conceded to those who have fairly won them. Relations must be adjusted to changed conditions; every one and everything must make way for rectitude. In no other way whatever will the path of peace be found. 2. *It is thus with the human soul.* We have all wandered from the way of wisdom and of righteousness; we have refused to God the love, the reverence, the service which is his due and which it is our highest interest to render. We have thereby become disordered, disquieted, confused; instead of dwelling in "a peaceable habitation," in "quiet resting-places," we have become inhabitants of a realm of condemnation, reproach, peril, agitation, misery. There is no way back to the home of rest which we have left behind us but by a return to righteousness; that is to say, by repentance, the turning our back on the sinful selfishness in which we have been living, and becoming right with God, accepting the gracious offer of his Son our Saviour (Matt. xi. 28, 29). (1) Rejection of truth may give a *false security;* (2) absorption in worldly pursuits or in pleasurable excitements may provide temporary *indifference;* but only righteousness, only the restoration of the soul to its true relation to God, by repentance and faith, will give *peace.*

III. RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL ENSURE PEACE BOTH IN POSSESSION AND IN PROSPECT. It will effect: 1. *Reconciliation with God,* and the consequent "peace which passes understanding,"—a blissful, satisfying "rest unto the soul," which is incomparably more precious than any earthly satisfaction to the body or the spirit. 2. *The inward and abiding rest* which belongs to spiritual harmony; this is the invariable consequence of the soul being in a right relation with the Supreme, and with its fellows, and of all its faculties being rightly related to one another. 3. *A peaceful departure* from the present life. 4. *A home in the quiet resting-place* of the heavenly land.—C.

Ver. 20.—*Fruitful labour.* "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." "There will be widespread desolation," says the prophet; "the fields will be untilled, the land will be covered with briars and thorns; but a glorious change shall come over the scene—the 'wilderness shall become a fruitful field' (ver. 15), the happy scenes of industry will again be witnessed, the arts and industries of agriculture will revive and flourish in all their former fulness. Happy will be the land that shall put forth its whole strength in the field; 'blessed are they that sow beside all waters.'" Two general truths spring from this passage.

I. THAT THEY ARE BLESSED WHO PUT FORTH ALL THE POWERS WITH WHICH THEY ARE ENDOWED. It should be the happiness of Israel in its time of restoration to leave no soil uncultivated that would yield produce; they would sow beside *all* waters. All its inhabitants, with all their agricultural implements, would be busy in the open fields; no strength left unexercised in the homes; no weapons left unused in the storehouses. Unhappy indeed is (1) the country whose population is doomed to enforced idleness, whose looms are still, whose ploughs are rusting in the homestead; (2) the family where sons and daughters are letting their various faculties lie idle, when they might be put forth to their own great advantage and for the good of others; (3) the man whose individual powers are slumbering in his soul, unspent and undeveloped. Blessed are they who expend all the resources they possess, who cultivate all their skill of hand, who develop all their strength of mind, who so put out all their talents that the whole energies of their spiritual nature will be employed, increased, perfected. By sowing beside all *waters* is meant sowing seed in well-watered, and therefore fruitful, soil. The expression consequently contains the idea—

II. THAT THEY ARE BLESSED WHO ARE ENGAGED IN REMUNERATIVE LABOUR. This is peculiarly true of the Christian workman. 1. He has the very best seed to sow: truth,

which God took centuries to prepare, which is the purchase of a Saviour's tears and blood, which is exquisitely adapted to the soil for which it is intended. 2. He has well-watered, *i.e.* fertile, responsive soil in which to place it. He has, amongst others: (1) *The virgin soil of youth.* Youth may often be inattentive, frivolous, unstable; nevertheless it is docile, affectionate, trustful, tender-hearted. (2) *The prepared soil of affliction.* When God has chastened the soul with his fatherly hand, there is a softness of spirit, an impressionableness of heart which makes words of comfort, of exhortation, of warning peculiarly welcome. (3) *The productive soil of poverty.* From the days when "the common people heard Jesus gladly," and when it was said "to the poor the gospel is preached," to these times in which we live, the poor have been comparatively rich in faith and hope. By those to whom the riches and enjoyments of earth are denied, the treasures of truth and the blessedness of the kingdom of God are likely to be prized and gained (see 1 Cor. i. 26—28). Blessed are they who sow such fertile soils, for theirs is not only the blessing which comes to all faithful labourers—the approval of Christ and their own spiritual advancement—but the great "joy of harvest," the joy which fills the husbandman's heart when he "comes again" from the "heavy-fruited" fields, "bringing his sheaves with him."—C.

Ver. 1.—*The ideal reign.* There can be no doubt that the first, and historical, reference of this prophecy is to the reign of Hezekiah. Cheyne says, "It describes the happy condition of Judah when idols have been cast away, and the rod of Assyrian tyranny has been removed. A more just and merciful government shall then be enjoyed, the result of a large outpouring of the Divine Spirit. As the consequence of this, moral distinctions shall no longer be confounded—men shall be estimated at their true value. When Isaiah wrote he may have had grounds for the charitable belief that his sovereign would really be equal to the demands providentially made upon him." But the prophecy is Messianic. Its anticipations are only fully realized in the kingdom of Christ. Weber says, "The picture which the prophet paints here of the Church of the last time is the picture of every true congregation of Christ. In it the will of the Lord must be the only law according to which men judge, and not any fleshly consideration of any sort. In it there must be open eyes and ears for God's work and word; and if in some things precedence is really allowed to the children of this world, still in spiritual things the understanding must be right and the speech clear. Finally, in it persons must be valued according to their true Christian, moral worth, not according to advantages that before God are rather a reproach than an honour." It is almost impossible for us to realize the idea of a *theocracy*, or direct rule of God over a people, as the pious Jew did. Exactly what Isaiah pictures is the theocracy fully established in a spiritual sense; and of this Hezekiah's reformed kingdom gave good suggestions. To bring the subject home to modern congregations, the leading features of a spiritual theocracy, a real and practical reign of God, in lives and in society, should be shown thus—

I. GOD'S WILL SHOULD BE THE ONE SUPREME LAW.
II. GOD'S WORD SHOULD BE THE PRACTICAL RULE OF CONDUCT.
III. GOD'S SON SHOULD BE THE GREAT MODEL OF CHARACTER.
IV. GOD-LIKENESS SHOULD BE THE ONE OBJECT OF PURSUIT.

Be it heart, be it life, be it Church, or be it society, wherever this is an honest and truthful description, there is the "ideal reign;" there the words of the text are fulfilled, and a "king reigns in righteousness." It is to establish individually and universally just this kingdom, that the Lord Jesus Christ has come. He begins his work by subduing to his obedience *single souls.*—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The correction of social confusions.* "When men's eyes are opened, they will no longer confound the essential distinctions of moral character, because they will no longer be deceived by mere appearances" (J. A. Alexander). "A due discrimination of character would be made in the times of the Messiah, and persons and things would be called by their appropriate names (comp. Mal. iii. 18; Matt. xxiii. 13—33; Eph. v. 5)" (Henderson). "The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light and light for darkness" (Matthew Henry). These sentences show that the subject intro-

duced is the influence of a righteous reign in helping men to see things as they really are, and to estimate persons according to their true worth, and not according to the mere show they may make. We deal specially with those confusions which come by false judgments of persons, and these take the following, among other forms.

I. ADMIRATION OF TALENTS BLINDS US TO BADNESS OF CHARACTER. What is thought to be "genius" is too often allowed to excuse all sorts of laxity. The men who can astonish and amuse us may be unclean, untruthful, injurious; but we readily pass all this by. When righteousness reigns, talent will have to go with character, or men will count it to be Satanic agency. What a man can *do* must never be separated from what the man *is*.

II. THE COMMAND OF WEALTH BRINGS FLATTERERS TO BAD MEN. There is no more painful sign of the moral deterioration of a race, than its worship of the rich because they are rich. Money can never make goodness. Wealth is not the stability of a nation. Its hope lies wholly in its good men. Yet the rich man may be violent, rude, masterful, cruel; nevertheless, multitudes will fawn on him, and call the "vile person liberal." When righteousness reigns, that confusion will be rectified, and the rich man shall have worship only if he deserves it for what he is.

III. THE RANK AND SOCIAL POSITION OF MEN NOW BEWILDER THEIR FELLOWS, AND MAKE TRUE ESTIMATES NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE. Well does Robert Burns remind us that

> "The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
> A man's a man for a' that."

No word of bitterness need be spoken concerning those to whom God has entrusted talents, or wealth, or social position. The point to enforce is simply the peril of letting these things confuse our ideas of moral character and moral worth. Evil is evil, and must be denounced as evil, in the genius, the man of wealth, and the man of title. Let Christ reign, and sin will be called sin, wherever it is found. He will strip all disguises off, and show us *things as they are*, and *men as they are*. The Lord hasten his coming!—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The stability of liberal men.* "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand," or, "be established." It is quite possible that Isaiah had in mind the good King Hezekiah, of whom very noble and generous things are narrated in 2 Chron. xxx. 22—26. Passing away to Messianic times, we are to see that the true subjects of Messiah, the ideal Prince, the King who reigns in righteousness, will be distinguished by a noble-minded benevolence, contriving and persevering in the execution of enlarged schemes of charity. In Ps. cx. 3 they are very strikingly described as "a people of voluntarinesses." The term here used, "liberal," is a comprehensive one and may fairly include—

I. THE NOBLE-MINDED MAN. That is the man who takes high, generous views; who does not make himself, and his own small interests, the measure of all his opinions and judgments. The man who is, everywhere and in everything, ruled by what is *right*, and not by what will *pay*. That man may often seem to be at disadvantage. Keenly self-interested men push him aside and push before him. It is not really so. God will give him the only true and eternal prosperities. He deviseth liberal things; in liberal things he perseveres; and by liberal things he shall stand.

II. THE BROAD-MINDED MAN. Who is not limited in his views by the sect or school to which he belongs, the class in society of which he forms part, or even by the bias which follows his own preferences in reading. The man who knows the "world is wide," and has room for all kinds of men and all varieties of opinion. The man who is quite sure there is a "soul of good somewhere, even in things evil." That man makes the best of life, gets honey everywhere. He is a "liberal soul, that shall be made fat."

III. THE CHARITABLY MINDED MAN. One who accepts cheerfully the great "law of service," and recognizes that all he has is for the use and benefit of others. It is all for spending, none for hoarding. "Even Christ pleased not himself." He could say, "I am among you as one that serveth." One who is sensitive to the wants and woes of his fellows, and has in him the soul of the Samaritan, who pities and *helps*, rather than the soul of priest or of Levite, who pity and *pass on*. Such a man puts con-

trivance, care, and self-denial into his service. And such a man "shall stand." "The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom" (comp. Ps. cxii. 5, 6).—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*Folk who are at ease.* Special reference is made to the women of the upper classes in Jerusalem, who were living in self-indulgence and extravagance, and setting mischievous example to all the women of the land. The coming woes would affect them all the more seriously because of the luxuries which they had gathered round themselves, and which had become to them fancied necessities. No doubt the idle, self-indulgent, and too often profligate conduct of these women greatly added to the pressure of the existing evils. It is suggested to us to consider how greatly, in every age, women represent and augment the evils of their times. Many a man has been ruined by his efforts to feed the pride, vanity, and luxury of these ease-loving, careless wives and daughters. And nations have lost their manhood in the moral decay of the "mothers" of the race. "When a land goes to ruin a great part of the blame of it rests upon the women. For they are more easily prompted to evil, as they are to good." But this "being at ease" describes the condition of what is called a "high state of civilization," when money is accumulated in the hands of the few, and these few, having no need to work, give themselves up to self-indulgence, manufacturing wants, and constantly craving for some excitement to relieve the dreadful *ennui* of life.

I. MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD NOT BE AT EASE. There is work to be done. Work for all. It is put close to our hand. There are evils to fight—evils so gigantic that every man and woman may have a place in the soldier-ranks. God worketh hitherto; Christ works; and woe to all who, in negligence or in rebelliousness, refuse to bear the yoke!

II. MANY MEN AND WOMEN MUST MASTER THEMSELVES AND THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES IF THEY ARE TO CEASE TO BE AT EASE. For careless ways may have become fixed habits. We may have deceived ourselves into the idea that our "doing nothing," our busy idleness, is really doing something. We begin to take life into our hands for ordering, when we face the question, "What is life given me for?"

"Life is real, life is earnest."

III. GOD'S WOE SURELY COMES ON ALL WHO KEEP AT EASE. Our Lord pictured this in his parable of the "rich man and Lazarus." That rich man, living at ease, is not to be envied while he lived, for the woe of God lay on him, making bitterness for his many idle hours. Much less is he to be envied when his life is done, for the woe of God is on him *there*. "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." "Tremble, ye women that are at ease!"—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*The Spirit as a quickening Rain.* The results produced by heavy rains in the East are so striking that these rains become a suggestive figure of the influence of God's Spirit on souls and on Churches. In times of prolonged drought, the ground is burnt up and chapped, and every sign of vegetation is destroyed. Then come the rains, the life in the soil responds, and in a few hours the world is green again. The figure of "pouring forth," or "pouring out," needs, however, to be very carefully used in relation to God's Spirit. It is only suited to the one aspect of the Spirit as an *influence*. It may be misconceived if applied to God the Spirit regarded as a Person. When we use this term "pouring" nowadays, we should carefully keep in mind the figure of the rains, with which it is properly associated. The Jewish Church thought of the Spirit as an influence. The Christian Church has received the larger revelation, and knows of the Holy Ghost as a Divine Person, "dwelling with us, and being in us." He comes to us. We may grieve him. He may depart. But only as a figure can we now speak of him as being "poured on us." The figure of "pouring" is also given in Joel iii. 1.

I. CHRIST'S CHURCH IS TOO OFTEN AS A DEAD THING. Illustrate from a parched field. Only noxious weeds can get vitality out of such a soil. Fields are dead because God withholds his rains. Souls are dead, Churches are dead, because God withholds his Spirit. Such withholding is done in judgment. The deadness of a Church is

always begun in neglect of God, and self-indulgence. The first love fades out; and then spiritual death waits, "crouching at the door." Dead, for there are no expressions indicating the life of trust and love.

II. ONLY GOD CAN QUICKEN THE DEAD. This one thing is always and altogether out of human reach. Man can do much; but he cannot make anything *live*. God quickens dead souls, and dead Churches, by the gift of his Spirit. Life wakens life. The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, and brought forth life. That Spirit of God comes down, like refreshing rains, upon the thirsty fields. That Spirit of God enters the temple of a human soul, and the response is *life*, finding all due expression in activity: "The wilderness becomes a fruitful field." "The kingdom of Messiah was brought in, and set up, by the pouring out of the Spirit; and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end." Then, with unceasing constancy and earnestness it becomes us to pray for the quickening, reviving grace of God the Holy Ghost.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Righteousness and peace.* Christianity means "righteousnese," and "righteousness" is an active power, ever working towards the production of peace, quietness, and mutual confidence. "The element of peace is that by which order is established and perpetuated, people are brought to cordial agreement and willing submission, unity is made a living and growing fact, and all the arts of domestic life and of civilized communities are promoted." The great Napoleon said, "War is the business of barbarians." Our own Wellington said, "Men who have nice notions of religion have no business to be soldiers." Lord Brougham said, "I abominate war as unchristian. I hold it the greatest of human crimes. I deem it to include all others—violence, blood, rapine, fraud, everything that can deform the character, alter the nature, and debase the name of man." John Howe wrote in this way, "Very plain it is that war is a mark of the apostasy, and stigmatizes man as fallen from God, in a degenerated, revolted state; it is the horrid issue of men's having forsaken God, and of their being abandoned by him to the hurry of their own furious lusts and passions."

I. CHRISTIANITY IS, DISTINCTIVELY, RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is its essential characteristic, and its necessary work. In this it stands alone, differing from all other religions. Matthew Arnold finds an expression for God which, though it has been well scorned, is really suggestive and helpful. He speaks of him as "the Eternal which makes for righteousness," which is always working towards this end, and regards this as the highest of all attainments. Other religions propose methods for propitiating God; in Christianity God proposes to make men good. Jesus Christ is the first, the model Christian, and he is good—"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." His requirement, of all his disciples, is personal character—righteousness. Apostles say of this religion, "Herein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith." Christ's personal call is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Christian growth is "changing into his image from glory to glory." We must "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which none can see the Lord." Prophets pictured the Christian ages, and saw holiness so pervading that it was even engraven on the bells of the horses. Let the Christian faith come to our hearts, and it will work out into righteousness. Let it go forth into society, and it will establish right principles, show right ways, give right impulses, tone with a right spirit, and work on until righteousness flows over all the land, like the waves of the sea.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS LINKED CLOSELY WITH PEACE. "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace." These two things can never be separated. Find the one, and you will soon find also the other. Unrighteousness, uncharity, selfish passions, and war go naturally together, hand-in-hand. Begin "righteousness" anywhere, and you have started on its working an active power that makes for peace. Every soldier that walks our streets, every cannon forged in our arsenals, is a testimony that the sin-curse yet hangs over us. We are not yet "all righteous," or the sight and the sound of war would be heard no more. When, as individuals, we are set right with God, peace comes at once into our hearts, and peaceableness gives tone and character to all our relations. The inner conflicts are stayed; the struggles between the flesh and the spirit are checked; the fever-heat of ambition is soothed; charity and brotherhood bring us into peace with all men. The gospel comes, "preaching peace by Jesus

Christ." Righteousness, thus getting round it the one small circle of a life, soon begins to widen its sphere. It rays out on every side. It flows forth, like a sweet scent, purifying the atmospheres wherever a man goes. Families would have a "peace passing understanding" if their members were "all righteous." Our Churches would cease to be the scenes of dissension, if the members were "all righteous." Social life would no longer witness the bitter antagonism of classes, if the people were "all righteous." Nations would soon turn wasteful war expenditure on armies and weapons into the fruitful channels of commerce, and gracious schemes of education and philanthropy, if righteousness did but pluck up ambitions, envyings, and rivalries, and plant in charity, brotherhood, and peace. Envy, hatred, malice, pride, ambition,—these unrighteous things bring forth war. Charity, meekness, self-denial,—these righteous things keep happy fellowship with gentle peace. "First pure, then peaceable." Alas that the prophetic picture should still seem to be but a vision of the distant future! But what a vision it is! and how our hearts spring towards it! Prophets paint it. Saints pray for it. God is working towards it. And it shall surely come. "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness." "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ [the Prince of Peace], and he shall reign for ever and ever."—R. T.

Ver. 18.—"*Quiet resting-places.*" The figure in this verse is connected with the relief afforded by the destruction of Sennacherib's army, and consequent retirement of Sennacherib to Assyria. Before the invaders all persons living in the country had to flee to the shelter of the walled cities, abandoning the property which they could not readily carry with them. On the removal of the invaders, the sense of security would return, and such persons would go home and find "quiet resting-places." We see in this passage an on-looking to the times when the Holy Ghost should be given, and he, ruling in hearts and lives, would make for all trustful souls "quiet resting-places." Treating the text meditatively, we dwell on times when, for us, this promise is realized.

I. THE QUIET RESTING OF EVENING-TIME. Such it is for wearied bodies and worn minds. Soothing is the calmness of natural evening, when the winds fail, the sun throws level yellow beams and long shadows, and the thousand noises of earth are subdued. Evening has a gracious influence on our spirits. It is the time for meditation, with Isaac. Very precious to Christian hearts are the quiet places for meditation, when holy feeling can be nourished.

II. THE QUIET RESTING OF THE SABBATH. Its first idea is "rest." We feel quiet; as if a spell had been breathed over us. The strain of life is relaxed. The world is away. We belong to the eternal world. Life-bustle is stilled. We can give room to other thoughts, and so we rest, body, mind, and soul.

III. THE QUIET RESTING OF TIMES OF AFFLICTION. Such times come into all lives. Times when we *must* be still. In illness, and in convalescence, there are many quiet, lonely hours. These are the scenes to which Christ invites us when he says, "Come ye into a desert place, and rest awhile."

IV. THE QUIET RESTING-PLACE OF DEATH. The grave is spoken of as the "place where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." And the place where there are memorials of the dead is often a most "quiet resting-place" for the living. This may be illustrated by the soothing, silencing, solemnizing influence exerted on us by a visit to Westminster Abbey. On earth there can hardly be found a more "quiet resting-place." Sometimes the chamber where we watch the dying of a saint of God is such a place. Beautiful to see the pain-worn face at last go into the repose of death. "When sinks the weary soul to rest." We may add that those who have found rest in God prove how graciously he gives *restful moments* in the very midst of the hurry and worry of life.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—*Sowing freely.* This is part of the description of restored prosperity when the national troubles are removed. "While the enemy shall be brought low, the Jews shall cultivate their land in undisturbed prosperity." The Assyrians must have almost entirely stopped all agricultural processes, and this involved terrible losses and sufferings. In explanation of the figure of the text it is suggested that, where the seed is

sown in the soil covered by water, it was customary to send oxen into the water to tread the ground before the seed was cast, so as to prevent it from being washed away by the subsidence of the waters. This, however, applies to such countries as Egypt, and to such crops as rice. The point set forth by the text seems to be that quiet and persistent continuance in duty, in daily toil, may be the most efficient expression of our trust in God. Regarding the sower as a type of the Christian worker, we may note the following things.

I. THE SOWER IS A MAN IN TRUST. He has the seed-corn for next year's harvest. The food of the people depends, in measure, on each one's faithfulness to his trust. The Christian is a man put in trust. He has what is for the blessing of men. Truth, more precious than seeds. Powers of sympathy and love that bring bountiful harvests. Wealth, and knowledge, and position, and opportunities, that may all prove life-giving to men. Above all, he has the trust of the gospel.

II. THE SOWER IS REQUIRED TO SOW ALL HE HAS IN TRUST. He is not to live on the seed. He is not to store it up safely. He is not to use it for any objects of his own. He must not delay in fulfilling his master's will with the seed. It was given to him that he might sow it all in the soil. So God would have the Christian put to use every talent, every trust, he has committed to him. In this our Lord is our example. Everything God gave him he gave away: love, truth, comfort, healing, pity, time, strength, character, life,—all, he gave away. In him there was no getting to *keep*; only getting to *give*.

III. THE SOWER IS REQUIRED TO SOW FREELY. "Beside all waters." Not too nicely examining the conditions of the soil; not selecting just the deep and prepared earth, but scattering freely, and scattering wide. The Christian never knows where, in *God's* fields, the richest harvests will be reaped. So he sows all over the field, sows in perseverance, and sows in faith.

In conclusion, it may be shown that the true sower is much more concerned with the excellence of his sowing than with the *results* that may attend it. These he must leave altogether in the hands of him who surely will not "let his work return unto him void."—R. T.

SECTION X. A PROPHECY OF JUDGMENT ON ASSYRIA (CH. XXXIII.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Vers. 1—6.—THE JUDGMENT ON ASSYRIA AND DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM, STATED GENERALLY. Events had progressed since the preceding prophecies were delivered. The negotiations carried on with Sennacherib had been futile (ver. 7), the heavy fine imposed and paid (2 Kings xviii. 14) had been of no avail (ver. 18); the Assyrian monarch was still dissatisfied, and threatened a second siege. Already he was upon his march, spoiling and ravaging (ver. 1). The people of the country districts had removed into the town (ver. 8)—in a little time the vast host might be expected to appear before the walls. All was terror, grief, and confusion. Under these circumstances, Isaiah is once more commissioned to declare the approaching discomfiture of the mighty conqueror, and deliverance of Jerusalem out of his hand (vers. 3, 4). The deliverance ushers in a reign of righteousness (vers. 5, 6).

Ver. 1.—**Woe to thee that spoilest.** The "spoiler" is here, evidently, Assyria—the world-power of this entire group of prophecies (see especially ch. xxx. 31; xxxi. 8), and the greatest "spoiler" of Isaiah's time. **Thou wast not spoiled;** *i.e.* "that hast not yet been spoiled thyself." A covert threat is conveyed in the words. **And dealest treacherously;** rather, *usest violence* (compare the comment on ch. xxi. 2). **When thou shalt cease to spoil,** etc. Conquering nations cannot with safety pause on their career. Their aggressions have roused so many enmities that, let them cease to attack, and at once they are attacked in their turn. Every man's hand is against the spoiler whose hand has been against every man.

Ver. 2.—**O Lord,** etc. The mingling of prayer with prophecy is very unusual, and indicative of highly excited feeling. Isaiah realizes fully the danger of his people and nation, and knows that without prayer there is no deliverance. His prayer is at once an outpouring of his own heart, and

an example to others. **We have waited for thee** (comp. ch. viii. 17; xxvi. 8). **Their Arm**; *i.e.* "the Arm of thy people." **Every morning.** Continually, day by day, since their need of thy support is continual.

Ver. 3.—**At the noise of the tumult the people fled**; rather, *the peoples*; i.e. the contingents from many nations which made up the huge army of Sennacherib. The "noise" is that caused by God "lifting up himself" (comp. Ps. xxix. 3—9).

Ver. 4.—**Your spoil shall be gathered.** The "spoiling" of Assyria would commence with the discomfiture of the great host. In the historical narrative (2 Kings xix. 35; ch. xxxvii. 36) nothing is said of it; but, beyond a doubt, when the host was to a large extent destroyed, and the remainder fled, there must have been an enormous booty left behind, which the enemies of the Assyrians would naturally seize. A further spoiling of the fugitives probably followed; and, the *prestige* of the great king being gone, marauding bands would probably on all sides ravage the Assyrian territory. Like **the gathering of the caterpillar.** The "caterpillar" (*khâsil*) is probably the grub out of which the locust develops—a very destructive insect. **Shall he run.** It would be better to render, *shall they run.* The word, indeed, is in the singular; but it is used distributively, of the various spoilers.

Ver. 5.—**The Lord is exalted.** His destruction of the Assyrian host is an exaltation of God; *i.e.* it causes him to be exalted in the thoughts of those who have cognizance of the fact (comp. Exod. xv. 14—16; Ps. xcvi. 3—10, etc.). It is an indication to them that he has his dwelling on high, and is the true King of heaven. **He hath filled Zion with judgment,** etc. (comp. ch. xxxii. 15—17). The destruction is, in part, the result, in part the cause, of the Jews once more turning to God, putting away their iniquities, and establishing the reign of justice and righteousness in the land (see ch. i. 26).

Ver. 6.—**Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times**; literally, *and the stability of thy times shall be* (i.e. consist in) *a rich store of salvations, wisdom, and knowledge.* The prophet here addresses the people of Judah in the second person, though in the next clause he reverts to the third. Such transitions are common in ancient compositions, and especially characterize the writings of Isaiah. **The fear of the Lord** is **his treasure**; *i.e.* the wisdom intended is that which is based upon "the fear of the Lord" (Ps. cxi. 10). This will be at once Judah's "treasure," and a guarantee of stability to her government and institutions (compare the Homiletics on ch. xxxii. 15—17).

Vers. 7—12.—THE PROPHET ENTERS FURTHER INTO PARTICULARS. Having "sketched the main outlines of his revelation," Isaiah proceeds to "fill in and apply the details" (Cheyne). He first describes the despair and low condition of Judah: the men of war wailing aloud; the ambassadors just returned from Lachish weeping at the ill success of their embassy; all travelling stopped; the land wasted and made a desert; the Assyrians still ravaging and destroying, despite the peace which had been made (2 Kings xviii. 14—16). Then suddenly he sees Jehovah rousing himself (ver. 10), and the Assyrians consumed, as if with a fire (vers. 11, 12).

Ver. 7.—**Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without.** "Their lion-hearts" (Cheyne); "heroes" (Delitzsch). Literally, *lions of God* (comp. ch. xxix. 1). They raise a cry of mourning in the streets, with child-like effusiveness (comp. Herod., viii. 99; ix. 24). **The ambassadors of peace.** Hezekiah probably sent several embassies to Sennacherib in the course of the war. One went to Lachish, offering submission, in B.C. 701 (2 Kings xviii. 14); another to Nineveh, with tribute and presents, in the same or the following year (2 Kings xviii. 15; comp. 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135). A third probably sought to deprecate Sennacherib's anger, when he made his second invasion (2 Kings xviii. 17) in B.C. 699 (?). These last would seem to be the "ambassadors" of this verse.

Ver. 8.—**The highways lie waste** (comp. Judg. v. 6). The meaning is that they were unoccupied. Fear of the Assyrians restrained men from travelling. **He hath broken the covenant.** Sennacherib, when he accepted the sum of money sent him by Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 15; 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135), must have consented to leave him unmolested for the future. But in a very short time we find him, apparently without any reasonable pretext, sending a fresh expedition against Jerusalem, requiring it to be admitted within the walls, and even threatening the city with destruction (2 Kings xviii. 17—35; xix. 10—13). Isaiah, therefore, taxes him with having broken his covenant. **Despised cities.** "Sennacherib," says Delitzsch, "continued to storm the fortified places of Judah, in violation of his agreement." **Regardeth no man**; *i.e.* "pays no attention to the protests that are made against his infraction of the treaty—does not care what is said or thought of him."

Ver. 9.—**The earth mourneth**; rather, *the land.* **Lebanon is . . . hewn down**; rather,

as in the margin, *is withered away* (comp. ch. xix. 6). Lebanon, Sharon, Carmel, and Bashan are the four most beautiful regions of the Holy Land, taking the word in its widest extent. Lebanon is the northern mountain-range, one hundred and twenty miles in length, clad with cedars and firs, and generally crowned with snow, whence the name (from *lâban*, white). Sharon is "the broad rich tract of land" which stretches southwards from the foot of Carmel, and melts into the Shefelah, noted for its flowers (Cant. ii. 1) and forests (Josephus, 'Ant. Jud.,' xiv. 13, § 3). Carmel is the upland dividing Sharon from the Esdraelon plain, famous for its "rocky dells" and "deep jungles of copse." Finally, Bashan is the trans-Jordanic upland, stretching from the flanks of Hermon to Gilead, celebrated for its "high downs" and "wide-sweeping plains," for its "forests of oak," and in ancient times for its herds of wild cattle. All are said to be "waste," "withered," and the like, partly on account of the Assyrian ravages, but perhaps still more as sympathizing with the Jewish nation in their distress—"ashamed" for them, and clad in mourning on their account. **Shake off** their fruits; rather, perhaps, *shake down their leaves*. Mr. Cheyne conjectures that the prophecy was delivered in autumn.

Ver. 10.—**Now will I rise.** Judah's extremity is Jehovah's opportunity. "Now" at length the time is come for God to show himself. He will **rise** from his throne, and actively display his power; he will **exalt** himself above the heathen—**lift himself up** above the nations.

Ver. 11.—**Ye shall conceive chaff.** The Assyrian plans against Jerusalem shall be mere "chaff" and "stubble." They shall come to nought. Nay, the fury of the foe against Jerusalem shall be the fire to destroy them.

Ver. 12.—**The people**; rather, *the peoples*, as in ver. 3; *i.e.* the nations composing the Assyrian army. **As the burnings of lime**; as thorns. Things that fire consumes utterly and quickly.

Vers. 13—24.—REFLECTIONS ON ASSYRIA'S OVERTHROW VIEWED AS ACCOMPLISHED. The prophet's first thought is, how wonderfully the overthrow has manifested the might of God (ver. 13). Next, how it must thrill with fear the hearts of the wicked among his people (ver. 14). Thirdly, how the righteous are by it placed in security, and can look back with joy to their escape, and can with confidence look forward to a future of happiness and tranquillity (vers. 15—24). Messianic ideas intermingle with these latter thoughts (vers. 17, 23), the image of a happy, tranquil Judah melting into that of Messiah's glorious kingdom.

Ver. 13.—**Hear, ye that are far off,** etc. Jehovah speaks by the mouth of his prophet, and calls on the nations of the earth, far and near, to consider and acknowledge his might, as shown in his judgment on Assyria (comp. Exod. xv. 14—16).

Ver. 14.—**The sinners in Zion are afraid.** The prophet proceeds to speak in his own person. The judgment on Assyria, he says, cannot but strike terror into the hearts of the immoral and irreligious in Zion. They cannot fail to realize their own danger, and to tremble at it. **Who among us,** they will say, **can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?** They will recognize God as "a consuming Fire" (Deut. iv. 24), whose next outbreak may be upon themselves, and will shudder at the prospect.

Ver. 15.—**He that walketh righteously,** etc. The prophet answers the question which he has supposed to be asked. None can endure the revelation of the presence of God but the holy and the upright—"he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Ps. xxiv. 4; comp. xv. 2—5). Uprightness is then explained as consisting in six things mainly—(1) Just conduct; (2) righteous speech; (3) hatred of oppression; (4) rejection of bribes; (5) closing the ear against murderous suggestions; (6) closing the eye against sinful sights. We may compare with this summary those of the Psalms above quoted. No enumeration is complete, or intended to be complete. Isaiah's has special reference to the favourite sins of the time—injustice (ch. iii. 15; v. 23), oppression (ch. i. 17, 23; iii. 12, 14; v. 7; etc.), the receiving of bribes (ch. i. 23; Hos. iv. 18; Micah iii. 11), and bloodshed (ch. i. 15, 21; lix. 3).

Ver. 16.—**He shall dwell on high**; literally, *inhabit heights*—live, as it were, in the perpetual presence of God. **His place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks**; rather, *strongholds of rocks* (i.e. rocky strongholds) *shall be his refuge*. He shall fly *to* God, as his "Rock and his Fortress" (Ps. xviii. 2), not *from* him, as his "Enemy and Avenger" (Ps. viii. 2). **Bread . . . waters**; *i.e.* all that is necessary for his support and sustenance. **Shall be given him . . .** shall be sure; rather, *is given him . . . is sure*. Godliness has "the promise of the life that now is," as well as that of the life "which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8).

Ver. 17.—**Thine eyes.** Another transition. Here from the third person to the second, the prophet now addressing those righteous ones of whom he has been speaking in the two preceding verses. **Shall see**

the King in his beauty. The Messianic King, whoever he might be, and whenever he might make his appearance. It has been said that beauty is not predicated of the heavenly King (Cheyne); but Zech. ix. 17; Ps. xlv. 2; and Canticles, *passim*, contradict this assertion. "How great is his beauty;" "Thou art fairer than the children of men;" "His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely." **The land that is very far off**; literally, *the land of far distances*. Bishop Lowth renders, "Thine own land far extended," and so Delitzsch and Mr. Cheyne. But if "the King" is Messianic, so doubtless is "the land"—the world-wide tract over which Messiah will reign (Rev. xxi. 1).

Ver. 18.—**Thine heart shall meditate terror**; *i.e.* "thou shalt look back upon the past time of terror, the dreadful period of the siege, and contrast it with thy present happiness." Mr. Cheyne quotes as an illustration, appositely enough, Virgil's "Et hæc olim meminisse juvabit." **Where is the scribe? . . . the receiver? . . . he that counted the towers?** Where now are the Assyrian officials—the scribe, who registered the amount of the tribute and booty ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. i. p. 476); the receiver, who weighed the gold and silver carefully in a balance (Layard, 'Nineveh and its Remains,' vol. ii. p. 377); and the engineer officer who surveyed the place to be besieged, estimated its strength, and counted its towers? All have perished or have fled away in dismay.

Ver. 19.—**Thou shalt not see a fierce people**, etc.; rather, *thou shalt see no more that barbarous people*—the Assyrians—*a people gruff of speech that thou canst not hear them, stammering of tongue that thou canst not understand them* (comp. ch. xxviii. 11). The generation which witnessed the destruction of Sennacherib's army probably did not see the Assyrians again. It was not till about B.C. 670 that Manasseh was "taken with hooks by the captains of the King of Assyria, and carried to Babylon" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11).

Ver. 20.—**Look upon Zion**, etc.; *i.e.* turn thy thoughts, O Judah, from the past to the present—from the time of the siege to the time after the siege terminated. **The city of our solemnities**; or, *of our festal meetings;* the city where we celebrate our Passovers, our Feasts of Weeks, our Feasts of Ingathering, and the like. **A tent that shall not be taken down.** There is, perhaps, a reference to Sennacherib's threat to remove the entire population from Jerusalem to a far country (ch. xxxvi. 19). **This threat should not take effect. Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed.** By "the stakes" are meant "the tent-pegs," to which the ropes are fastened which keep the tent firm (comp. Exod. xxvii. 10; xxxviii. 18, 31; Judg. iv. 21). The promise that they shall "never" be removed must be understood either as conditional on the people's walking uprightly (ver. 15), or as a promise of a *long* continuance merely.

Ver. 21.—**But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a Place of broad rivers**; rather, *there in majesty the Lord is ours; [the Lord who is] a Place of broad rivers*, etc. Some critics think that "a place of broad rivers" may be exegetical of *shâm*, "there," and so apply it to Jerusalem; but the majority regard the phrase as applied directly to Jehovah. As he is "a *Place* to hide in" (Ps. xxxii. 7; oxix. 114), so he may be "a *Place* of broad rivers," full, *i.e.* of refreshment and spiritual blessing. **Wherein shall go no galley.** The river of God's grace, which "makes glad the city of God," shall bear no enemy on its surface, allow no invader to cross it.

Ver. 23.—**Thy tacklings are loosed.** The comparing of God to a river has led to the representation of Judah's enemies as warships (ver. 21). This causes Judah herself to be viewed as a ship—a badly appointed ship, which has to contend with one whose equipment is perfect. The prophet's thoughts have travelled back to the existing state of things. **They could not well strengthen their mast**; rather, *they cannot hold firm the lower part of their mast.* The mast had its lower extremity inserted into a hole in a cross-beam, and required to be kept in place by the ropes. If they were loose, it might slip out of the hole and fall overboard. **They could not spread the sail**; rather, *they cannot spread the ensign.* The ensign would seem to have been attached to the top of the mast. If the mast fell, it would no longer be spread out, so as to be seen. **Then is the prey of a great spoil divided.** The word "then" is emphatic. *Now* the disabled ship seems incapable of coping with its enemy. *Then* (after Assyria's overthrow) Judah will obtain an immense spoil (see ver. 4). **Even the lame shall have their portion.**

Ver. 24.—**And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.** There shall be no sickness in the restored Jerusalem—at least, no "sickness unto death." **The people that dwell therein** shall be **forgiven** their **iniquity.** Once more the prophet floats off into Messianic anticipations.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 6.—*The fear of the Lord, Judah's treasure.* The best treasure of a nation is a religious spirit. Judæa had been ravaged by the host of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, had had all her "fenced cities" taken (ch. xxxvi. 1), had been stripped of her most precious treasures in silver and gold (2 Kings xviii. 14—16; 'Eponym Canon,' p. 135) by the rapacious king, and was left with an empty treasury, down-trodden vineyards, and fields unsown (2 Kings xix. 19); but her best treasure still remained to her—she was rich in "the fear of the Lord." The fear of the Lord gave her (1) wisdom, to direct her steps aright, to keep out of entangling alliances, and abstain from provoking attack; (2) energy, to throw off her depression and struggle manfully against her misfortunes, to clear and sow her lands, replant her vineyards (2 Kings xix. 19), and rebuild her villages and country towns; and (3) complete trust in God, to support her amid all trials and troubles through which she might have to pass, and secure her against the despondency which is the worst foe of declining states. After the deliverance which she had experienced, it must have been plain to her that "God was in the midst of her;" that his power had no limit; and that, so long as she feared him and put her trust in his protection, she was safe from any and every enemy. A nation thus circumstanced is a thousand times richer than one which has countless store of silver and gold laid up in its treasuries, granaries overflowing, lands teeming with crops, magnificent cities full of goodly merchandise, well-stored magazines and arsenals, but no trust in a Divine Protector, nor reliance on him who is alone "mighty to save."

Ver. 10.—*The opportuneness of God's judgments.* It is characteristic of Divine interpositions that they take place at the moment of greatest need. Isaac is on the point of being sacrificed when the angel calls to Abraham out of heaven (Gen. xxii. 10, 11). Elisha is compassed about with horsemen and chariots, and on the point of falling into his enemies' hands, when they are smitten with blindness (2 Kings vi. 15—18). The Israelites are hemmed in between the Egyptians and the sea, and must perish on the morrow, when the waters are divided for them, and a way opened to them for escape (Exod. xiv. 10—22). More especially is the appropriateness of the time noticeable, when the interposition is in the shape of a judgment. Judgments are opportune doubly: (1) with respect to those on whom they fall; (2) with respect to those whom they relieve.

I. JUDGMENTS ARE OPPORTUNE WITH RESPECT TO THOSE ON WHOM THEY FALL. God is so merciful that he will not judge men "before the time," or until they have "filled up the measure of their iniquities." Hence it is the general rule that his enemies are at their greatest height of exaltation, and at the very *acmé* of their haughtiness and pride, when the fatal blow falls upon them. Assyria had reached the zenith of her greatness under Sennacherib in B.C. 700. He himself had reached a pitch of arrogance unknown to former kings (2 Kings xix. 23, 24; ver. 8), when the destroying angel went forth. So Nebuchadnezzar was stricken down at the height of his glory and his glorying (Dan. iv. 29—33); and Haman had attained to the greatest elevation possible for a subject (Esth. v. 11) when he was seized and hanged in front of his house. Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 21—23) is another instance; and so, perhaps, is Arius.

II. JUDGMENTS ARE OPPORTUNE WITH RESPECT TO THOSE WHOM THEY RELIEVE. Generally, though not always, a deliverance accompanies a judgment. God, when he "pu teth down one, setteth up another." Hezekiah and the Jewish nation were delivered by the destruction of Sennacherib's host. Mordecai was saved when Haman suffered death. Alexander and the Catholics of Constantinople breathed again when Arius suddenly expired. The Church had rest when Galerius perished miserably. It is in their utmost need especially that God succours men, perhaps because they then turn to him with most sincerity, and offer their supplications to him with most earnestness. When they call to him "out of the depth," their need and their faith both plead for them, and he "hears their voice" (Ps. cxxx. 1, 2).

Ver. 17.—"*The King in his beauty.*" When Christ appeared on earth at his first coming, he "had no beauty that men should desire him" (ch. liii. 2). Roughly clad and toil-worn, whatever the heavenly expression of his countenance, he did not strike

men as beautiful, majestic, or even as "comely" (ch. liii. 2). But at his second coming it will be different. St. John the Divine describes him as he saw him in vision: "In the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. i. 13—16). The description in Canticles is cast in a more terrene mould, but equally indicates a more than earthly beauty: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is *altogether lovely*" (Cant. v. 10—16). The following adaptation by Dr. Pusey of the words of an ancient writer says all that can be said by unassisted human pen on a topic transcending man's power of thought or speech: "If we could ascend from the most beautiful form which the soul could here imagine, to the least glorious body of the beatified, on and on through the countless thousands of glorious bodies, compared wherewith heaven would be dark, and the sun lose its shining; and, yet more, from the most beautiful deified soul, as visible here, to the beauty of the disembodied soul, whose image would scarce be recognized . . . yea, let the God-enlightened soul go on and on, through all those choirs of the heavenly hierarchies, clad with the raiment of Divinity, from choir to choir, from hierarchy to hierarchy, admiring the order and beauty and harmony of the house of God; yea, let it, aided by Divine grace and light, ascend even higher, and reach the bound and term of all created beauty,—yet it must know that the Divine power and wisdom could create other creatures, far more perfect and beautiful than all which he hath hitherto created. Nay, let the highest of all the seraphs sum in one all the beauty by nature and grace and glory of all creatures, yet could it not be satisfied with that beauty, but must, because it was not satisfied with it, conceive some higher beauty. Were God forthwith, at every moment, to create that higher beauty at its wish, it could still conceive something beyond; for not being God, its beauty could not satisfy its conception. So let him still, and in hundred thousand, hundred thousand thousand years with swiftest flight of understanding, multiply continually those degrees of beauty, so that each fresh degree should ever double that preceding, and the Divine power should, with like swiftness, concur in creating that beauty, as in the beginning he said, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' after all these millions of years he would be again at the beginning, and there would be no comparison between it and the Divine beauty of Jesus Christ, God and Man. For it is the bliss of the finite not to reach the Infinite" (Pusey, 'Minor Prophets,' p. 562).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—6.—*Jehovah a Refuge.* It is "Israel's extremity, but God's opportunity." Retribution is about to fall on Assyria; salvation and every resource is to be found in Jehovah.

I. WOE TO ASSYRIA. This land appears under the image of a rapacious spoiler. The time is about B.C. 700, and the allusion is to Sennacherib and his army, who had advanced on a plundering and destroying course. The tables are to be turned, and the greedy conqueror (cf. 2 Kings xviii. 14, 15) was to become the object of other's greed in turn. Whether the words imply a complaint of unprovoked aggression and of perfidy is not clear. But to the prophetic eye in every age it is clear that empires founded upon force, fraud, and rapacity cannot endure; that they who take the sword will perish by the sword. It was the fate of Assyria to fall beneath the mightier powers of Media and Babylon.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER AND TRUST. "O Jehovah, be gracious unto us! For thee have we waited." It is the attitude of *calm confidence;* it is the mood in which things distant and unseen are realized. Here the prophet sees what is improbable to the eye of worldly calculation—the downfall of the proudest power of the time. It is not less an *energetic* attitude—all the endeavour of the spirit straining after that highest point of view, where the confusions of the time fall into the unity of the Divine purpose. It is a *seeming weak*, yet *really powerful*, attitude; the foe trembles when he sees us on our knees. The arm of Jehovah is the symbol of strength, put forth in time of danger, *interposing* and *delivering* (cf. Exod. xv. 16; Job xl. 9; Ps. xliv. 3; lxxvii. 15; lxxxix. 21; xcviii. 1). Not only in particular emergencies, but "every morning," *i.e.* constantly and evermore, may that arm be ours to lean upon, and we shall be strong and know no fear. And such is the effect of this act of prayer and contemplation, that already the symptoms of change are heard in the air. There is a confused sound in the distance, as of the roll of many waters; the people are rushing in flight. Jehovah is seen lifting himself up (cf. Numb. x. 35; Ps. lxviii. 1), and a great rout of the nations ensues; and the conquerors are seen swarming down upon the spoils, as the caterpillars on their food.

III. THE ATTRIBUTES OF JEHOVAH AS THEY ARE REVEALED IN PROPHETIC THOUGHT, AS THEY ARE CONFIRMED BY HISTORIC EVENT. 1. *His inviolable strength.* He is *secure;* he is One who dwells in the height (Ps. xcvii. 9). The heavens shall rather fall than he be dethroned, his dynasty over all nations come to an end. 2. *His abundant resources of good.* A chorus seems here to break forth in his praise. He has filled Zion with spiritual treasures, these being ever united with temporal blessings in the theocracy. *Justice* and *righteousness.* The effect of the temporal deliverance will be that men will turn to the Deliverer, and will walk in his ways and according to his laws (cf. ch. xxx. 22, etc.; xxxi. 6; xxxii. 15, etc.). Amidst the vicissitudes of these times, the people will have a principle of constancy. There will be "store of salvations" for every time of need in the religious "wisdom and knowledge" diffused among the people. Compare with this the picture of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings xviii.). In one word, the "treasure" of the nation will be the fear of Jehovah, *i.e.* true religion—in distinction from successful wars or commercial prosperity. Perhaps the love of material treasured on the part of the kings of Judah is indirectly rebuked. The true wealth of a people, as of an individual, must ever be the mass of its available wisdom and piety.—J.

Vers. 7—12.—*The uprising of Jehovah.* I. HIS UPRISING IS A FIGURE OF PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITION. There are times when he seems to be still, seated, and looking on, and the course of events to defy his will (ch. xviii. 4). Men cry, "How long, O Lord? Awake, stir thyself up to deliver!" But he knows his own time; he is not a day too soon, nor too late. When the hour of providence has struck, the scene instantly changes. "*Now* will I rise; *now* I will lift up myself!" It is not for us to know the times and the seasons. Our part is to tarry, expect, work, and pray.

II. GOD UPRISES WHEN MAN IS CAST DOWN. The condition of the land seems hopeless and despairing. The lion-hearted heroes break down in weeping and lamentation, and the messengers, bewailing the hard conditions of peace, keep them company. The scene is Oriental and passionate. The roads are deserted; the land at the mercy of a perfidious conqueror, who holds his promise in contempt. The land languishing in the wane of the year, and the falling leaves of Bashan and Carmel, seem silently to sympathize with human woe. Yet one word from the Eternal suffices to change the whole situation: it is a word of supreme contempt for all the machinations of man. Their conceptions are as "hay," their pretensions as "stubble," their furious breath as self-devouring fire; and in a great conflagration the people will perish. Worldly passions and worldly might, he that sitteth in the heavens derides; his word abolishes the proud, while it supports the humble.—J.

Vers. 13—16.—*Living near to God.* Jehovah has uprisen; he has revealed his might in the destruction of the Assyrian host; he calls through the prophet upon all the nations to acknowledge him.

I. THE AWFULNESS OF GOD. We see it reflected from the horror-struck faces of the ungodly and the profane. He is indeed seen to be a "consuming Fire," having his

"furnace in Jerusalem" (ch. xxxi. 19). And all the immoral and the unprincipled, the heedless and the worldly, feel themselves as fuel for his wrath—they whom the continual returns of the Word preached do not alter, so that their old sins remain firm, entire, and unbattered, the baseness of their inclinations unchanged, the levity of their discourse and behaviour; those whose former distresses and disasters have not laid low in the valleys of humility, nor circumscribed the lashings out of their luxury; they whose past miseries and restraints give only a relish instead of a check to present pride and intemperance; those whom all the caresses of Providence have not been able to win upon, so as to endear them to a virtuous strictness, or deter them from a vicious extravagance;—all such—unless the great God be trivial and without concern in his grand transactions with our immortal souls—during this condition, so far as we can judge, are fashioning for wrath. "He is a probationer for hell, and carries about with him the desperate symptoms and plague-tokens of a person likely to be sworn against by God, and hastening apace to a sad eternity" (South).

II. DWELLING NEAR TO GOD. Who can endure the vicinity of this devouring Fire? Only they who have intrinsic spiritual worth, which when tried by fire will appear unto "praise and glory." "Only that which yields itself willingly to be God's organ can abide those flames (cf. on the burning bush, Exod. iii. 2)." Of all else, like briars and thorns, the "end is to be burned" (ch. x. 17; xxx. 27). The fire ever burning on the altar (Lev. vi. 13) is the symbol of him in whose nature wrath and love unite; the wrath being the symptom of love, which must ever *glow* against evil. The answer to the question is given in the picture of the good man which follows; his character positively and negatively, his consequent security.

III. PICTURE OF TRUE PIETY. 1. *Its completeness.* He walks in "perfect righteousness." Not so the righteousness of "scribes and Pharisees," partial and imperfect, but rounded out to the full requirements of the Divine Law. The hypocrite "singles out some certain parts, which best suit his occasions and least thwart his corruptions." The proud or impure man may be liberal to the poor, may abhor lying and treachery, and may be ready in the fulfilment of duties which do not jostle his darling sin. But it "will not suffice to chop and change one duty for another; he cannot clear his debts by paying part of the great sum he owes" (South). To offend in one is to be guilty of all (Jas. ii. 10). The chain of duty is broken by the removal of a single link. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments" (Ps. cxix. 6). It is not a handsome feature or a handsome limb which makes the handsome man, but the symmetry and proportion of all. So, not the practice of this or that virtue, but an entire complexion of all, can alone render a man righteous in the sight of God. 2. *Its leading characteristics.* It unites what human corruption is ever tending to dissever, religion and morality. It imitates the Father in heaven in the justice of his perfect Being. It rejects unjust gain, flings the bribe as a thing of pollution from the hand. It is *abstinent* from the greed of gold, that most downward and degrading vice, making the soul "all earth and dirt, burying that noble thing which can never die." "Thou shalt not take a gift, because a gift blinds the eyes of the wise" (Deut. xvi. 9; cf. 1 Sam. xii. 3; Eccles. vii. 7). Covetousness is a thing directly contrary to the very spirit of Christianity; which is a free, a large, and an open spirit—open to God and man, and always carrying charity in one hand, and generosity in the other (South). It is *exclusive* in reference to evil, as *inclusive* in reference to good. The good man walks with ear and eye shut against the moral contagion around him. As the leaven of disease will not develop save in the unhealthy body, so moral evil will not grow to a head in the soul antipathetic to it. He "seals up the avenues of ill." By listening and looking come all our best and all our worst inspirations. Dead to sin, he "neither hears nor sees;" alive to God, he is all ears and all eyes, for his words, his inspirations. The chastity of the spirit extends to the senses, and if the mind be full of the love of purity, "each thing of sin and guilt," is driven far from it. Itself remains intact as the sunbeams glancing on the garbage-heap. 3. *Its security and satisfaction.* The good man dwells on the heights (cf. Ps. xv.; xxiv. 3, 4), inaccessible to *miasmata* from the poisonous swamps below, braced by the different air, enlivened by glorious prospects. He will have food, and that in abundance. To "eat and be satisfied" is the simplest and strongest figure for intellectual satisfaction, for a rich inner life; as hunger that of an empty, distressed, self-torturing spirit. But as food is of no service without an appetite for it, so this spiritual satisfaction can only

be theirs who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who have fixed their minds upon an Object, which still invites the most boundless and unlimited appetite. The nobler senses are never weary of exercise upon objects which delight them. We do not surfeit upon noble music, nor do rare pictures cloy. The desires of the righteous are so agreeable to the ways of God that they find a continual freshness growing upon them in the performance of duty; like a stream, which, the further it has run, the more strength and force it has to run further (South).—J.

Vers. 17—24.—*The reign of Hezekiah.* Amidst all the agitation caused by the invasion of Sennacherib, and his perfidy, "the voices of true prophets were raised with power, pointing to the imperishable elements in the true community, and proclaiming the approach of a great crisis, the crushing weight of which should alight only on the faithless, whether among the Assyrians or in Judah" (Ewald). Here we find a reflection of the excitement of the time.

I. THE GLORY OF THE KING. His beauty is a moral beauty—that of a just rule (ch. xxxii. 1); an "ideal beauty—the evidence of God's extraordinary favour." The picture should be compared with that in Ps. xlv. The eyes of the people shall see a land of distances. Looking northward and southward, and eastward and westward, the boundaries of the kingdom shall still be extended, far as eye can reach.

II. VANISHED TERRORS. The Assyrian officials who registered the amounts of the tribute, who tested the silver and the gold, who counted the towers of the city about to fall their prey, shall have vanished. The people themselves shall proudly and thankfully number those intact towers (Ps. xlviii. 13). No longer shall the jarring accents of the foreigner's stammering tongue fall upon their ears.

III. THE STRENGTH AND SPLENDOUR OF ZION. Look upon her! Once more the festive throngs shall gather there. Once more she shall be a house of peace, or dwelling of confidence, a quiet resting-place. She had indeed seemed like the tent of wanderers, the pegs ready to be drawn out, the cords to be rent, at the bidding of the conqueror. The people had been threatened with removal (ch. xxxvi. 17). This fear shall have passed away. The majesty of Jehovah, like an all-protecting ægis, terrifying to his enemies, assuring to his friends, shall be revealed in Zion's state. That presence, which is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," shall have returned thither; that right hand, which is glorious in power, shall again have been stretched forth to deliver and to protect. Jehovah, and he alone, is the Defence of Jerusalem. What though she be unlike "populous No, situate among the rivers, with the waters round about it, and the rampart of the sea" (Nah. iii. 8), or Babylon, "seated on the waters" (Jer. li. 13),—he shall be instead of rivers and canals to his holy city. It is the streams of a spiritual river which "shall make glad the city of God" (Ps. xlvi. 4).

IV. THE DIVINE RULER. By him kings reign and princes decreed justice. The earthly king is but representative of him who is enthroned in heaven, the "great King." Hezekiah is but his vicegerent, his inspired servant. The weak political power becomes strong through him. Though Zion be like a dismasted ship, she will prevail over the proud, well-rigged ships of her foes. Sin will cease, punishment will be at end, and, with it, bodily suffering and sickness (ch. xxxv. 5, 6; lxv. 20; Mark ii. 10, 11). "A people, humbled by punishment, penitent and therefore pardoned, will dwell in Jerusalem. The strength of Israel and all its salvation rest upon the forgiveness of its sins."

V. LESSONS. 1. *National judgments will only cease with national sins.* "Humble repentance is to cure us of our sins and miseries; and there can no cure be wrought unless the plaster be as broad as the sore." 2. *The most effectual way to avert national judgments is the way of personal amendment.* Particular sins often bring down general judgments. Sin, like a leprosy, begins in a small compass, yet quickly overspreads the whole. 3. *The forsaking of sins begets hope in the mercy of God.* Because he has promised upon that condition to remove them; because he actually often has so removed them; because, when men are thus humbled, God has attained the end of his judgments (South).—J.

Ver. 17.—*The glorious vision.* "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."

There is much of beauty in this world. And by Christ Jesus God created the worlds. So that he is the Archetype of all beauty. Everything lovely was first a *thought* of Christ before it became a fact in life. These eyes of ours have seen glorious spectacles: the sun rising to run his race; the tender greens and purples of the seas; the magnificence of Carmel and Lebanon. How much also have we all seen of *moral* beauty!—the gentleness of pity; the heroism of endurance; the sublimity of sacrifice. Yet *these* have all been mingled with some elements of worldliness and sin.

I. THIS PROPHECY IS FULFILLED IN CHRIST AS THE TRUE KING. Think of the kings of every age: the Pharaohs; the Cæsars. There we see power, pageantry, and, alas! too often criminality and cruelty. Here we see the true King. One whose government is Divine, because it is *within*, holding in supremacy the conscience and the heart. One who is a King who "reigns in righteousness, mighty to save."

II. A PROPHECY FULFILLED IN THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER. Beauty lies in symmetry and completeness; he was perfectly holy, without spot or blemish. Beauty lies in subtle harmonies; and in Christ justice, love, and wisdom were all united in one. Beauty lies in conformity with moral law; and he was "harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Beauty is not to be found in mere sentiment alone. Character is not to be tested simply by exquisite feeling or profound teaching, but by a life where truth *felt* and truth *spoken* and truth *lived* are all embodied in one. He who spake as never man spake could also say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

III. A PROPHECY FULFILLED THROUGH THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL VISION. "Thine eyes shall *see*." The beauty of Christ can be seen only through the lens of moral disposition. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." It is distinctly said of the wicked, concerning their view of Christ, "They shall see no beauty in him that they should desire him." We may have the artistic eye to see the beauty of Grecian capitol and Roman arch, but we may not have the spiritual eye whereby alone we discern spiritual things.

IV. A PROPHECY FULFILLED IN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. "*Thine* eyes." Powers of vision cannot be transferred. How we have longed, perhaps, that those we love should see this beauty too! Nor can they be intellectually *willed*. We must have the spiritual heart before we can enjoy the spiritual eye.

V. A PROPHECY TO BE PERFECTLY FULFILLED IN THE FINAL REVELATION OF HEAVEN. Whatever we may see there of new displays of God's creative energy and power, however fair and lovely our own beloved ones may be now that they are "without fault before the throne of God,"—we may be sure of this, that Christ will be "the Altogether Lovely." The eye will be perfectly purged from sin, and the soul perfectly alive to God. Then Christ's own prayer will be fulfilled, "That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me."—W. M. S.

Ver. 1.—*Aggravated evil.* I. THAT SIN IS OFTEN FOUND IN AN AGGRAVATED FORM. It may take the forms of which the prophet here complains. 1. *Unprovoked aggression.* "Thou spoilest, and (though) thou wast not spoiled." Men may go so far as to assail their fellow-men without the slightest justification; this may be in the shape of open war, or of brutal individual assault, or of unlawful appropriation, or of shameful slander. 2. *Inexcusable treachery.* "And dealeth treacherously, and (though) they dealt not," etc. Men will go so far in iniquity as to deceive, entrap, and even ruin—and that not only in a pecuniary, but even in a moral sense—those who are guileless and unsuspicious; they will take a mean and execrable advantage of the innocence which should not appeal in vain for the protection of the strong. Those thus wantonly and heinously guilty may beguile others from the paths of (1) faith and piety; (2) virtue; (3) the practical wisdom on which depend the maintenance and comfort of the home.

II. THAT WHEN THUS FOUND IT EXCITES GOD'S DEEP DISPLEASURE. The Divine "woe" is pronounced against it. And this "woe" is only one note in a large and full outpouring of Divine indignation in all parts of the sacred Scriptures. Prophet and psalmist and apostle, yes, and the Lord of love himself (see especially Matt. xxiii.), unite to utter the awful anger of God "against them who commit such things." It includes: 1. His holy indignation directed against the evil-doers themselves; not the *sin*, but the *sinner* (Ps. vii. 11; Rom. ii. 8, 9). 2. His boundless hatred of the evil deed; not the *agent*, but the *act* (Jer. xliv. 4; Hab. i. 13). All sin is a leprous, a

loathsome, thing in God's sight: how much more so those aggravated forms of it in which man wantonly injures and ruins his fellow-man!

III. THAT IT IS CERTAIN TO MEET WITH RETRIBUTION ANSWERING TO THE OFFENCE. We know: 1. That impenitent sin will be followed by the judgments of a righteous God. The Divine "woe" points to severe punishment—to loss, sorrow, ruin, death (Exod. xxxiv. 7; Prov. xi. 21; Rom. ii. 6, etc.). 2. That retribution will be proportionate to the magnitude of the offence (Luke xii. 47, 48; John ix. 41; xv. 22; Rom. ii. 12). 3. That retribution is likely to take a form which corresponds to the offence. "When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled," etc. (1) Violence provokes violence; they that take the sword do commonly perish with the sword (Matt. xxvi. 52). (2) Craft will be undermined; against the subtle schemer men will combine and use their ingenuity to overturn him. (3) Avarice finds its own wealth an insupportable burden. (4) The rejection of the supernatural ends in the acceptance of the superstitious, etc. "With what measure we mete, it is measured to us again."—C.

Ver. 2.—*The lesser and the larger mercies.* This prayer includes the striking request, "Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." The words suggest the pertinent and not unprofitable question—Are we laid under greater obligation by the lesser mercies of God which we are continually receiving, or by the larger ones which we occasionally receive at his hands? We look at both—

I. THE LESSER MERCIES WE ARE CONTINUALLY RECEIVING. God is to us "our Arm every morning;" he is our support from day to day, from hour to hour; "in him we live and move and have our being." We may pass many days in which no striking or impressive mercy is bestowed upon us; but we pass no single hour, we spend no fleeting minute, in which some kindnesses do not come from his bountiful hand. Our indebtedness arising from these may be estimated when we consider: 1. *Their regularity.* The nature of God's kindnesses is commonly missed by reason of their regularity; they are referred to "law," as if law had any power, in itself, to originate or to sustain. Consequently, they are not traced, as they certainly should be, to the love and care of a Heavenly Father. But their value is immeasurably enhanced by their regularity. How much more "gracious unto us" is our God in that he is "our arm every morning"! in that we can confidently reckon on the morning light, on the evening shadows, on the incoming and outgoing tides, on the returning seasons, *and can arrange and act accordingly*, than if the Author of nature gave us his blessings irregularly, spasmodically, at such uncertain intervals that we could make no arrangements, and hold no permanent offices, and be in constant doubt as to whether or when our agency would be required! 2. *Their constancy.* We are leaning on God's arm continually. It is not merely a matter of frequency; it is not by a permissible hyperbole that the psalmist says, "the goodness of God endureth *continually*" (Ps. lii. 1); nor is it without reason that he asks of God "that his loving-kindness and his truth may *continually* preserve him" (Ps. xl. 11). Every year God is crowning with his goodness; he "daily loadeth us with benefits;" he is our arm every morning of our life; each night he lays his hand upon us in sleep and "restores our soul." We may well join in singing—

> "The wings of every hour shall bear
> Some thankful tribute to thine ear."

For on the wings of every passing hour come many mercies to our hearts and to our homes from the protecting and providing love of God; and we may go yet further and say, or sing, "Minutes came fast, but mercies were more fast and fleet than they." God's creative power gives us our life, and his constant visitation preserves our spirit (Job x. 12).

II. THE LARGER MERCIES WE SOMETIMES RECEIVE. God is "our salvation also in the time of trouble." The greatness of our indebtedness to him for these his larger, his especial and peculiar loving-kindnesses, we may estimate if we consider: 1. *Their frequency.* Though infrequent as compared with his constant favours, yet they are not infrequent in themselves, if we count them *all*—national, ecclesiastical, family, individual. 2. *Their exceeding preciousness to us who receive them.* Who can reckon the worth of one single deliverance from (1) the gulf of black disbelief; or from (2) the power of some unholy passion—avarice, or lust, or revenge; or from (3) the misery

of some threatened loneliness or (what is far worse than that) some entangling and ruinous alliance; or from (4) the dark shadow of some false and cruel slander? Only they who have been thus saved in the time of trouble, who have been lifted up and placed on the solid rock of safety, and made to walk again in the sunshine of peace and hope, can say how great is that mercy from the hand of God. 3. *Their costliness to the Divine Giver.* (1) If in all human sympathy there is an expenditure of self, which, though most willingly rendered, is yet painful and oppressive to the spirit, shall we not think that there is this element also in him whose sympathy is so much stronger, and whose sensibility is so much finer than ours (see ch. lxiii. 9; Luke xix. 41; John xi. 35; Heb. iv. 15)? (2) One great redemptive act—the salvation which is in Christ Jesus—was wrought at the cost of a Divine incarnation, of sorrow, of shame, of death. *He gave himself for us.* We conclude that, (*a*) taking this last thought into account, the special mercies of God do incalculably outweigh the constant ones; (*b*) that together they constitute an overwhelming reason for worship, for obedience, for consecration; (*c*) that we do well to appeal to God in earnest prayer for the special mercies we need, and to wait expectantly for them. "O Lord, be thou gracious unto us; we have waited for thee."—C.

Vers. 5, 6.—*A wise nation (Church).* These verses supply us with three features by which a nation or Church that is possessed of true wisdom will be characterized.

I. A PERVADING SENSE OF GOD—of his greatness, his power, his righteousness. "The Lord is exalted; he dwelleth on high; he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness." The result of the deliverance wrought by Jehovah would be the creation of this devout sentiment. The holy nation, the Church after the heart of its Divine Author, will strive to maintain this as an abiding, religious sense; it will cherish that feeling of reverential awe which fills the heart when the *greatness* of the Exalted One is realized, when the *power* of him that makes his judgments to be known is felt, when the *righteousness* of him who overturns iniquity is present to the mind. Well does it speak for the community, civil or sacred, when this sacred sense of God "hath filled" it from end to end, from the least to the greatest. This pervading conviction is, indeed, an essential thing; without it the most vehement protestations, the most honoured creeds, the most ecstatic fervours, will soon be found to be as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

II. A DEEP SENSE OF THE TRUE SOURCE OF STABILITY AND STRENGTH. "Wisdom and knowledge," etc. It has always been the case that communities have imagined that their stability and strength rested in things material and visible—in seas and mountains, in armies and navies, in lands and houses, in large numbers of men and women, in goods and grants. But all these things prove to be of no avail when there is inward rottenness, when disunion has crept into the state or into the Church, when the process of demoralization has set in so that it cannot be arrested. No external resources of any kind, however numerous or strong they may be, will save a society that is giving itself up to that which is false and foul. Its defeat and dissolution are only a question of years—or days. The true source of stability and of strength is in *heavenly wisdom*—that "knowledge" of God which means, not only a perception of the truth but a love of it, a delight in it, an acceptance of it as the one thing that will cleanse the heart, and that should regulate the life.

III. A RIGHT ESTIMATE OF PROSPERITY. "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." What is it that constitutes wealth or prosperity? According to the answer which we give to this question our spiritual position may be well determined. If we are indulging the illusion that our prosperity consists mainly in money, or in stocks, or in mines, or in acres; or if we seek for it in numbers, or in reputations, or in the patronage of the titled and the strong, we are living in a "paradise of fools." "Surely our riches are not where we think, and the kind heart is more than all our store." Yes! and not simply the kind heart, but the pure heart, the heart (1) that has been purified of the love and tolerance of sin by the truth and by the Spirit of God; (2) that has been led to hide itself in the Divine mercy, and to lose itself in the love of a Divine Friend and Lord; (3) that lives to bear witness to his truth, and to magnify his holy Name. That Christian Church that holds itself rich, that finds its *treasure* in the fear of the Lord, in the consequent and complementary love of Jesus Christ, is the Church that is

divinely wise. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning"—and a very large part also—"of wisdom."—C.

Vers. 10—16.—*In the presence of the Holy One.* The great question which, in a somewhat different form from that of the text, Balak proposed to Balaam (Micah vi. 6) is one that has always stirred the hearts of men everywhere and in all ages. We must find an answer to it if we are to enjoy any "rest unto our souls."

I. THE THRICE-HOLY LORD, OUR GOD. That which makes God's intervening purpose (ver. 10) so serious to his creatures is that when he arises he will be found to be as "the devouring Fire," as "everlasting Burnings;" *i.e.* he will prove himself to be the Holy One of Israel: (1) Whose *Spirit is absolutely intolerant* of iniquity, hating it with perfect hatred, to whom it is so abhorrent that he "cannot look" upon it. And (2) whose *action is inflexibly opposed to it;* (*a*) placing limits to its temporary success (ver. 11); (*b*) bringing its decrees and its achievements to nothing, as the lime-kiln reduces everything to ashes; (*c*) consuming the strength of the impious and the rebellious as easily and as swiftly as the fiery flames burn up the thorns (ver. 12). To fallen, guilty man, whose character has been depraved and whose life has been stained by sin, God is obliged to make himself known, and to make himself feared as "the devouring fire," as "the everlasting ['the continual'] burnings," consuming iniquity in the holy ardour of his unquenchable purity.

II. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ONE. Who among us shall dwell with this Holy One, this consuming Fire? Who shall abide in his presence and dwell in his holy hill? (Ps. xv. 1; xxiv. 3)? There are different senses in which we are before God, or stand in his presence. 1. *His observant presence*, which is constant, of which we do well to remind ourselves often, with the thought of which our minds and hearts may well be filled. 2. *His interposing presence.* Those times and occasions in particular when he arises to judgment (ver. 10); when he stretches forth his hand in punishment or in reward; when he sends back the Assyrian monarch in humiliating flight, and at the same time lifts up the head of bowed and trembling Jerusalem; when he breaks the arm of the oppressor and the chains of the captive; when he scatters his enemies and redeems his people. 3. *His presence in the sanctuary.* When he manifests himself to his waiting ones as he does not unto the world. 4. *His nearer presence in another world.* When in a most solemn sense we shall "stand before" him, and when in a most blessed sense we shall "dwell with" him.

III. THOSE WHO CAN ABIDE IN HIS PRESENCE. The answer is negative and positive. 1. *Negative.* (1) Not the guilty ones among the unprivileged. To those who "have not the Law," but who are guilty of transgressing the unwritten law; to all who act as Assyria did on this occasion, spoiling those who had not spoiled them, etc. (ver. 1), God will mete out his indignation (see ver. 11). (2) Not the insincere among the children of privilege. "Fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites" (ver. 14). Let all who sing the praises and utter the words of the Redeemer consider whether gratitude and devotedness are in their hearts as well as on their lips. 2. *Positive.* They can dwell with the Holy One who are possessed *of moral because of spiritual integrity.* "He that walketh righteously," etc.; *i.e.* he that is of sound heart, and therefore of a pure life. With us, in this Christian era, it may be said of spiritual integrity (1) that its foundation is laid in genuine repentance, in a change of heart towards God; (2) that it takes the form of a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (3) that it manifests itself in excellency of character. And this last is seen in the marks, which the prophet here indicates: in *upright conduct* (walking righteously, refusing bribes); in *soundness of speech*; in *refusing all access to evil* (stopping the ears and shutting the eyes from hearing and seeing what is injurious and defiling); in *a hearty hatred of injustice* (despising the gain of oppression).

IV. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO DWELL WITH GOD. Whether here or hereafter, but in a higher degree and more perfect form hereafter, there are promised these two great blessings. 1. *Security.* "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence," etc. Nothing shall harm him, no sin shall have dominion over him; in the arms of God's protecting care his home shall be impregnable to assault. 2. *Sufficiency.* "Bread shall be given him," etc. He may not have all he would desire, but he shall have everything he needs for his real welfare and his true joy.—C.

Ver. 17.—"*The King in his beauty.*" "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." Of this we may take—

I. THE CONTEMPORARY VIEW. Those who heard these words from Isaiah's lips or read them from the roll on which he wrote them would naturally think of Hezekiah. But in what aspect would they think of him as clothed on with beauty? Not, surely, as one arrayed in gorgeous royal robes, or as one surrounded with the pomp of a royal court; but as one who wielded the kingly sceptre in righteousness and in wisdom. The king in his beauty, to the eye of the man who speaks for God, is that sovereign who (1) honours God in all his doings and dealings with man; (2) uses his position and his power to further Divine truth; (3) lays himself out for the good of others rather than for his own enjoyment or the aggrandizement of his house. And these things, *mutatis mutandis*, constitute the beauty of all earthly authority and power.

II. THE MESSIANIC VIEW. If we refer the words of the prophet to him to whom, in themselves and apart from the context, they are most appropriate—to that Son of man who came to be the Saviour-Sovereign of mankind, we have two views brought before us. 1. That of Jesus Christ as he lived on earth—the meek King of men (Matt. xxi. 5), he who claimed to be a King even as he stood bound before Pilate (John xviii. 33—36). Here we see the King in his beauty as we see him in his purity of heart, in his devotedness to the work his Father had placed in his hands, in his submissiveness to that Father's will, in his quick and tender sympathy with the sorrowing and the abandoned, in his inexhaustible patience with the undeserving and the wrong. 2. That of the Divine Redeemer as he reigns in heaven. Thus viewed, we see in him the beauty of one who (1) once surrendered everything he was and had in order that he might redeem a fallen race,—the beauty of the most perfect sacrifice; (2) now welcomes to his kingdom the worst of all that have rebelled against his will,—the beauty of perfect magnanimity; (3) now bears with his servants in all their manifold infirmities and insufficiencies of service,—the beauty of perfect patience; (4) now dispenses grace and help to every one of his followers according to their individual necessities and requests,—the beauty of perfect beneficence.

III. THE DISTANT VIEW. Our eyes will see the King in his beauty when we see "*him as he is*"—the ascended and reigning Lord. Then we shall (1) behold the glories of his heavenly administration; we shall (2) dwell upon the transcendent excellence of his Divine character; and we shall then (3) be drawn towards him in spiritual resemblance (1 John iii. 2), live under his reign in unremitting and untiring service (Rev. vii. 15; xxi. 25), dwell with him and reign with him in everlasting joy (2 Tim. ii. 12; Rev. ii. 26; iii. 21; xxii. 5).—C.

Ver. 17.—*The breadth of the kingdom.* "They shall behold the land of far distances" (see marginal reading). We look at—

I. THE BREADTH OF THE HISTORICAL KINGDOM. Judah was to be delivered from her Assyrian oppressor. At present she was beleaguered, shut in on every hand, by the invading army; her citizens had no range of land they could traverse—they were confined to the narrow circle made by the besieging hosts of Sennacherib. But soon those boundaries would be removed, the army would be scattered and would disappear. Then the country would be open everywhere; in whatsoever direction they looked they would see hills they might climb and valleys they might cultivate at will; as far as the eye could reach the country would be free to the traveller and to the husbandman. They would behold a "land of far distances," a broad kingdom they might call their own.

II. THE BREADTH OF THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. That kingdom of Christ, wherein we stand and in which we so much rejoice, is a "land of far distances," a region of glorious breadth of view and range of motion and of action. There is nothing in it that is limiting, nothing that confines; everything is on an enlarged scale. There is about it a noble and inviting freedom; the horizon-line recedes perpetually as we advance. This applies in full to its distinguishing features. 1. *The grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ.* The breadth, the fulness, of the Divine Father's love in giving us his Son (John iii. 16; Rom. viii. 32); the fulness of the Saviour's love in making such a sacrifice of heavenly dignity, glory, and joy (John i. 1—14; Phil. ii. 6, 7; 2 Cor. viii. 9), and stooping to such depths of darkness, shame, and woe, humbling himself even unto death: what glorious breadths and depths and heights have we here! 2. *The mercy*

of God now extended to us in Jesus Christ; reaching to those who have gone furthest in presumptuous sin, in vice, in crime, in unspeakable enormities; extending to those who have sinned against the clearest light and the most gracious influences; touching those who have gone to the very verge of human life: what noble breadths, what far distances, have we here! 3. *The patience of Christ* with his erring and imperfect followers. 4. *The usefulness of a devoted and generous Christian life.* Who can calculate the extent to which a life of holy love, of self-denying service, stretches out and flows on, out into the remote distance of space, on into the far future of time?

III. THE BREADTH OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM. We confidently expect to find in the heavenly country a "land of far distances." 1. *In its spacial dimensions;* if, indeed, that can be truly said to have dimensions which is boundless in its lengths and breadths. To no narrow sphere, reckoned in yards or miles, shall we there be limited. Our outlook will be one that is immeasurably large, for the country of the blessed is, "to our heart and to our hoping," a land of *very* far distances indeed. 2. *In the excellences and glories of the character of its King.* When will the time come that we shall have covered all the ground in that great exploration, that we shall have surveyed all the heights and traversed all the breadths of the glorious and beautiful character of the Son of God? There are regions beyond regions, summits beyond summits, there. 3. *In the capacities of its subjects.* There is something of great interest and of genuine worth in the growth of the human mind from infancy to maturity; something well worthy of being watched and in every way to be desired. But there comes a point beyond which that development may not go; there is a meridian-line, reached at a different age by different men, across which we may not step, at which it is imperative that we return, that we decline. We dare to hope that, in the "land of far distances," that boundary-line is indefinitely far off; that "age after age, for ever," we shall go on acquiring not only knowledge but power, the horizon-line of spiritual maturity continually receding as we advance in wisdom and strength. 4. *In the range of its service.* "His servants shall serve him;" and in what varieties of way may we not hope to serve him there? Here the service of God and of man takes many forms—we can serve by action and by suffering, by example and by persuasion, in word and deed, in things secular and in things sacred, alone and in company with others. We look for a land, we wait for a life, in which opportunities of serving the Eternal Father and of blessing his children will be far more numerous, far more varied, far greater and nobler in their nature. We hope for a land of such glorious breadth on every hand that, not only in our enlarged capacities, but also in our multiplied and magnified opportunities, we shall find it a "land of great distances." (1) Take care to be there. (2) Be ready to start well on the heavenly course, for according to our beginning will be our progress at every point in all succeeding ages.—C.

Vers. 18—24.—*Happy times.* A very pleasant picture is this of a nation or of a Church on which the full blessing of God is resting. There are several elements in its prosperity.

I. A SENSE OF THE DIVINE MERCY. "The people . . . shall be forgiven their iniquity" (ver. 24). A sense of pardoned sin and of reconciliation to God is at the foundation of all true peace, all sacred joy, and all holy usefulness.

II. THE MAINTENANCE OF DEVOTIONAL HABITS. Zion is to be always known as "the city of solemnities" (ver. 20). There reverent prayer and grateful praise and earnest inquiry of the Lord are to be continually found.

III. THE ABIDING PRESENCE AND FELT POWER OF GOD. The word that will most commonly be heard on the lips, because most frequently rising from the soul, will be "the Lord." "Jehovah is our Judge." "Jehovah is," etc. (ver. 22). Everything is to suggest *him*, is to be referred to his will, is to be ascribed to his grace.

IV. A PLEASANT RECOLLECTION OF EVILS THAT ARE OVER. (Ver. 18.) Happy the Church or the man when the dark days that have been and are gone are sufficiently removed from present experience to make the memory of them a source of joy and not of pain. Such a time does often come, and we may well rejoice and be glad in it. The home is the dearer and the more delightful for the privations that have been passed through on the way.

V. ABUNDANCE FOR EVERY PURE DESIRE. The "glorious Lord" will secure bountiful

supplies for every imaginable need, even as the broad river and outstretching streams provide verdure and grain over all the surface of the well-watered land, even as the affrighted and fleeing army leaves prey which even the halt and the lame will be strong enough to take. In the day of God's blessing there will be nourishment for the thoughtful, and also for those who feel more than they think; truth for the wise and for the simple, for the mature of mind and for the little child; posts of service for the advanced Christian and also for those who have just begun their course; such fulness, even to overflow, of all that meets the wants and cravings of the heart, that the weakest as well as the strongest shall find his place and take his share.

VI. DIVINE GUARDIANSHIP. Prosperity is dangerous, but, with God's Spirit in the Church, it shall not be harmful. On the broad river of success and satisfaction the sails of the spiritual enemy shall not be seen (ver. 21). "The sun shall not smite by day;" it will illumine and warm, but will not scorch and wither. Consequently, there shall be—

VII. SOUNDNESS AND SECURITY. The inhabitant will not be sick (ver. 24); "Jerusalem will be a quiet habitation," etc. (ver. 20). Spiritual soundness, moral integrity, purity of heart, shall prevail. And this abounding, there will be no abatement of prosperity; the stakes will not be removed, the tent will remain; there will be no need for any going into exile; there will be a happy permanence and fixedness of abode.

The picture is one that is ideal rather than actual; it is what every Church should aim to present. Only the favour of God can possibly secure it. The vital question is—How is that favour to be won? And that question resolves itself into other questions—Is there occasion for *humiliation* and a change of spirit and of behaviour? Is there need for more internal *union* (Ps. cxxxiii. 3)? or for more *prayer* (Luke xviii. 1; Jas. iv. 3)? or for more *love* both of Christ and man (1 Cor. xiii. 1; Rev. ii. 4)? or for more *zeal* (Rev. iii. 15)?—C.

Ver. 2.—*Constant renewals of Divine help.* "Be thou their Arm every morning." Prophetic reference is made to that wonderful morning, when the inhabitants of Jerusalem arose, and, looking forth from the walls of the city, beheld the besieging army of Sennacherib a multitude of corpses (ch. xxxvii. 36). The prayer is that every morning of life may bring its witness of as real, if not as striking, helpings and deliverings and defendings of God. The reference to the "arm" is specially appropriate, as keeping in view the soldierly defence of the city. The prophet and others may do what they can with heart and head; but in view of defence against an outward enemy, those that serve *with the arm* are specially important. Therefore we have the prayer that the Lord himself might be the Arm of those who have devoted their arm to the country. Matthew Henry paraphrases thus: "Hezekiah and his princes and all the men of war need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need, therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and, 'as the day so let the strength be.'" Treating the text as a basis for meditation, we observe that God has been graciously pleased to arrange our life on earth, not as one continuous and unbroken space of time, but as a succession of brief periods, carefully and regularly separated from each other; a series of *days*, we call them, divided by ever-recurring nights of sleep. A man's life is not properly a thing of so much length; it is made up of so many days. Looking back over life, the patriarch Jacob says, "Few and evil have the *days* of the years of the life of my pilgrimage been, and have not attained unto the *days* of the years of the lives of my fathers." If our life on earth were one continuous, unbroken scene, it would surely be impossible for any of us to become truly good. So much of our hope of ever winning goodness lies in our being able to try again and again, to begin again and again with each returning day. However hopelessly we may end one day, we may step cheerfully forth to new endeavours as each new morning comes. Then how tenderly helpful is the assurance that we can have the "arm of the Lord" for our help every morning! God's idea of life for us is that it shall be given to us in pieces, separated from each other—pieces shaped and fashioned as he may please, and each piece given to us as fresh as if we were really born again every day. God gives us thus, morning by morning, and day by day, in order that our thoughts may be fully

concentrated on *to-day*. To-day is ours. To-night is not ours. To-morrow is not ours. No man has any to-morrow until God gives it to him, and then he must call it to-day. We cannot grasp a whole life; we can grasp the duties of to-day. What "grace" is for a long and changeful life we do not know, we cannot know. God offers us grace for just the day that begins with *this morning*. And the *arm* of the Lord is precisely what we need day by day. Gathering up the scriptural associations of this figure, especially in the Book of Isaiah, the following points may be illustrated.

I. EVERY MORNING WE NEED ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ARM TO LEAN ON. The distinction between the godly and the ungodly man cannot be more sharply defined than by saying, "The ungodly man tries to stand by himself, and the godly man loves to lean on another." The change, the renewal, the new birth of a man, finds its expression in this "loving to lean." It is but the gracious response of God to this gracious disposition, that he offers his arm afresh every morning for the good man to lean upon. "On my arm shall they trust."

II. EVERY MORNING WE NEED THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ARM TO GUIDE US. It is the *fact* of life, but it is much more than that—it is the *experience* of life, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." So Isaiah, speaking of the journeyings of God's people, refers to God who "led them with his glorious arm." That arm is like a signal held out, showing our daily path. It is even the arm and hand that keeps us steadily in the right, the narrow path. The figures of the unknown journey, or voyage, may be used. This journey is taken in stages, and every morning our wise, safe, strong *Guide* is waiting, ready to give us his good help.

III. EVERY MORNING WE NEED THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ARM TO DEFEND US. "That arm is not shortened, that it cannot save." How little we realize our day-by-day dependence on Divine providence! "Dangers stand thick and hover round." By what we call "accidents," men and women about us are killed or wounded every day. Some one defends us. It would be well for us if we more clearly saw God's saving arm defending us continually. Then there are our enemies; some are by circumstance enemies, and some are by wilfulness enemies. But how little they ever do that really hurts us! Noisily they dwell around us, like the armies of Sennacherib, but our Defender is there every morning, Shield for each new day. But it is more searching to think of our *bad selves*, and how we need defending from *them*. Every morning wakes the old self, with some of the old frailties, habits, prejudices, passions. Above all else we need, day by day, the presence and the power of him who alone can defend us from ourselves.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The secret of stability for every age.* This is presented by showing what would be the secret of stability in the kingdom of Hezekiah, when safety and peace were again restored. The prophet anticipates the removal of the great and serious national evils, which had brought on the people Divine judgments, and rejoices in the prospect that "righteousness would exalt the nation." We may well think that, in thought, he passed on to the times of Messiah, when alone his great hopes could be perfectly realized. We have four words given as the great sources of the national security and stability —"judgment, righteousness, wisdom, and knowledge." If we attach precise and appropriate meanings to each of these, we shall learn what are the secrets of stability for all times.

I. JUDGMENT. Not here equivalent to "wise decisions," "skilful plans," or "good counsels." The idea is rather that of strong and vigorous dealing with sin. There is no security for any community or society that is weak in its handling of sin. And this is true also of the individual life; we must be resolute and firm in mastering our own habits and passions, "cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes." If a nation is to prosper it must be strong and firm in its judgments.

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS. Here ordering life and relations by good and wise principles and rules. Unrighteousness is disorder—the chaos which follows when "every man does that which is right in his own eyes." Righteousness, for a people, is rightness, comformity to good rules, the copying of good models. And this is a first and important sense of righteousness for the individual. It is the righteousness which a man may attain; but there is the further righteousness which a man may receive from *Jehovah Tsidkenu*, "the Lord our Righteousness."

III. WISDOM. This, on its practical side, is the skilful ordering and rule of circumstances, so as to get the most and the best out of them, and resist the evils that may be connected with them. "The wisdom profitable to direct." The wisdom which may be illustrated for social and political life from the ever-watchful man of business, who seeks to turn everything to good account; or from the anxious housewife, who tries to make the best of everything.

IV. KNOWLEDGE. Which, in this connection, is the careful adjustment of things which men may make on the *basis of experience*. Knowledge proving a practical help. The knowing man is the opposite of the simple, or inexperienced, man, who is bewildered and endangered by difficult circumstances.—R. T.

Ver. 14.—*Who can stand the testing fires?* The terms "devouring fire," "everlasting burnings," do not mean hell; they mean God in visible, material judgments, such as may be symbolized by the destruction of the Assyrian army; and such as the presence of that army became to the people of Jerusalem. The appeal of Isaiah seems to be this: See the fright into which the people have fallen at the presence of this hostile army. See who has been calm and strong in this hour of national peril. How, then, would it be with men in the more awful times of God's testing judgments? The man who alone can dwell in the "devouring fire" is the good man. He that is able to abide "the everlasting burnings" is "the man that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly." Maclaren says, "The prophet has been calling all men, far and near, to behold a great act of Divine judgment, in which God has been manifested in flaming glory, consuming evil; now he represents the "sinners in Zion," the unworthy members of the nation, as seized with sudden terror, and anxiously asking this question, which in effect means, "Who among us can abide peacefully, joyfully, fed and brightened, not consumed and annihilated, by that flashing brightness and purity?" The prophet's answer is the answer of common sense: "Like draws to like. A holy God must have holy companions."

I. THE TESTING FIRES. These are future, but they are not altogether future. Perhaps we shall presently come to see that the passing testings are more serious than the future ones. Every life-work must be tried with fire; it is being tried with fire. Every day we are in the "everlasting burnings." Life is God's testing fire. This is illustrated by the influence national calamities have upon nations. Through baptisms of blood and devouring fires nations come forth purified. "Through much tribulation [God's testing for us] we must all enter the kingdom."

II. THE EFFECT OF THE TESTING FIRES ON THE EVIL-MINDED. Symbolized in the panic of the godless folk in Jerusalem when Sennacherib drew nigh. At the sound of threatening they took alarm, and hurried to Egypt for help. Their vain self-confidences fell about them as soon as the test was applied. Can we face the judicial and punitive action of that Divine Providence which works even here? and how can we face the judicial and punitive action in the future?

III. THE EFFECT OF THE TESTING FIRES ON THE GOOD-MINDED. They cannot escape from the common earthly conditions. The fires try every man's spirit and every man's work. There are some—should we not be among them?—on whom even the "second death" hath no power.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*God's witness to character.* Connect this verse with the description of the righteous man given in ver. 15, observing how very *practical* is the righteousness which God requires and approves. The good man walks uprightly, speaks worthy things, wants nothing that is his neighbour's, will neither be bought nor forced to do that which is wrong, refuses to listen to evil, and shuts his eyes that he may not see it. God is on the side of such a good man, and whatever may be the disabilities in which he is placed by his fellow-men, he may be quite sure of safety and provision. "God is a Refuge for him." "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate." "The Lord doth provide."

I. THE GOOD MAN MUST BE IN THE WORLD, BUT HE SHALL BE ABOVE IT. Our Lord prayed thus: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Put into Eastern figure, before earthly troubles the good man is as safe as a people hid behind the "munitions of rocks"

when the invader is in the land. God makes no new lot, no fresh circumstances, for the good man. He does not promise any man that he will alter his earthly conditions, or altogether relieve him of his troubles. He lifts the good man up above his earth-scenes, by "strengthening him with strength in the soul," making his soul bigger than his circumstances. A man is not lost until he has lost *heart*. But if God supplies inward strength we never shall lose heart, and so we never shall be lost. Outwardly, a man may be tossed about, worn, wearied, wounded, almost broken, yet inwardly he may be kept in perfect peace, his mind stayed on God; he may be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." He may "dwell on high," "out of the reach of present troubles, out of the hearing of the noise of them; he shall not be really harmed by them, nay, he shall not be greatly frightened at them." This is the portion of the good; God's witness to character.

II. THE GOOD MAN MAY HAVE LITTLE, BUT HE IS SECURE OF ENOUGH. "Bread and water" represent his necessities, not his indulgences; a sufficiency, but not a luxury. So good Agur prays, "Feed me with food convenient for me." The figure here is taken from the limitations of a time of siege. The "necessary," as distinguished from the "luxurious," is so difficult to decide. What has become a necessity for one person another still looks upon as luxury. One great evil of our age is the development of fictitious wants. We are called back to simplicity by the promises of God. "No *good* thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." All that is needful is pledged to us, but for all the rest we are dependent on Divine grace; then what "monuments of grace" we must be!—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*Visions of the King.* The Targum reads, "Thine eyes shall see the Shechinah of the King of ages." The idea of the prophet probably is, that the good man shall see, with his soul-eyes, God himself delivering and rescuing the city from its threatening foes. The good man never can be content with agencies and instrumentalities and second causes. He must recognize the living God, working his work of grace by means of them. He cannot be content unless he can "see the King in his beauty"—the beauty of his redemptive workings. Some see a reference to Hezekiah, clothed with an ideal beauty, the evidence of God's extraordinary favour. But however we may begin with that, it is but a step to the much more satisfying thing, the spiritual vision of God. "Can God be seen? and if so, how? What is the true vision of God? Is it possible to men? By what means can we realize it? It is a question as old as humanity. In a thousand ways of formal interrogation, or unconscious yearning, we are ever putting it. In a thousand ways of ignorance, superstition, or intelligence, we are ever trying to answer it." We may dwell on—

I. THE EYES THAT SEE. Strangely imprisoned by their bodily senses, which are their sole mediums of communication with the world of material things, men overvalue the knowledge which the senses can bring them, and under-value those more real and more important worlds which are revealed only to the eyes of the mind and of the soul. No bodily vision of God can ever be given to dependent creatures; meeting our sense-conditions, Jesus Christ, the Man, is, for us, the "Brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person." But souls can have that near sense of God which can only be represented as a *vision*. Faith, love, purity, holy desire, patient waiting, are the conditions of soul-eyes to which God is revealed. Each of these suggests illustrations and practical applications.

II. THE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN. Three things are indicated. 1. Soul-eyes see *the King*. They are quick to discern God's presence. They detect him everywhere and in everything. Life is serious, life is glorious, to them, because God is always "walking in the garden," always close by. 2. Soul-eyes are keen to detect *his beauty* or his graciousness; especially as seen in the tenderness and care of his watchings, defendings, and deliverings. Soul-eyes are *long-visioned, and can see the future*, which they know is in God's hands, and will surely prove to be the scene of God's triumph. Whatever men may think and say and feel about the present, this is certain—the future is with the good.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*The true theocracy.* It is most difficult for us to realize that idea of Jehovah as the direct Ruler and Governor of a nation, which was the one characteristic

thought of the Jews, and the great underlying idea of the Mosaic revelation. But this verse gives us most material help by setting out a threefold relation of God to men in the theocracy.

I. GOD IS THE LAW-MAKER. "The Lord is our Lawgiver." This is true in two senses. 1. God gave the formal laws from Mount Sinai, which were written down by Moses, and made the basis of the national covenant. Compare and illustrate by the work of Lycurgus and Justinian. God's laws, as arranged for the Hebrews, were only the adaptations to their national life of the conditions and rules under which God set humanity from the first. This should be made quite clear, lest a notion should prevail that God's Law to the Jew was his first revelation to men. It was the writing out of essential law for the practical use of one people. 2. God gives revelations of his will, which are law for all who receive them. There is no finality in the revelation of God's law, for the very reason that God maintains *living* relations with us, and those relations involve that the expression of his will is *law to us* at any given time. Illustrate by the prompt and entire obedience of the prophets to God's will, howsoever it may be revealed to them. Such revelations are made to us, and for us God's will is law.

II. GOD IS THE LAW-APPLIER. "The Lord is our Judge." This is precisely the work of the judge—to show how the principle and the comprehensive terms of the law bear on each particular case. Moses, Joshua, David, Samuel, and Hezekiah, referred each case of difficulty directly to the Divine Judge. But in just *this* Israel so often failed; and *this* we still find to be our supreme difficulty. We can accept the fact that *law* is from God, but we want to preside ourselves over all applications of law. What we need is the confirmed habit of referring all things to God our Judge.

III. GOD IS THE LAW-EXECUTOR. "The Lord is our King." The proper idea of a king is one entrusted with power to carry out the requirements of the national law. The king is the *executive*. God carries out his own laws. Scripture is full of striking instances which are designed to impress the general truth. Take such cases as Achan, Korah, Uzza, Ananias, and Sapphira. This phase of God's relation is not so difficult to apprehend as the previous one; and yet in these days we are in some danger of losing our sense of the directness of Divine judgments.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*No more sickness.* This is clearly a figure, designed to complete the picture of relief from the strain and pressure and anxiety of the time of invasion. Sickness is the constant attendant on prolonged siege. The point on which we may dwell is that sickness is the sign of the presence of evil, of sin; and so heaven is represented as the place where there is no more sickness, because there is no more sin. This connection between sickness and sin lies at the basis of some of the most important Mosaic regulations. It explains the importance ceremonially attached to the one disease of leprosy. Trench states this very skilfully: "The same principle which made all that had to do with death, a grave, a corpse, the occasions of a ceremonial uncleanness, inasmuch as all these were signs and consequences of sin, might in like manner, and with a perfect consistency, have made every sickness an occasion of uncleanness, each of these being also death beginning, partial death-echoes in the body of that terrible reality —sin in the soul. But, instead of this, in a gracious sparing of man, and not pushing the principle to the uttermost, God took but one sickness, one of those visible outcomings of a tainted nature, in which to testify that evil was not from him, could not dwell with him; he took but one, with which to link this teaching. Leprosy, which was indeed the sickness of sicknesses, was selected of God to the end that, bearing his testimony against it, he might bear his testimony against that out of which it and all other sicknesses grew—against sin, as not from him, as grievous in his sight; and against the sickness itself also as grievous, inasmuch as it was a visible manifestation, a direct consequence, of the inner disharmony of man's spirit, a commencement of the death, which through disobedience to God's perfect will had found entrance into a nature made by God for immortality."

I. ALL SICKNESS IS A LITTLE DEATH. It is a beginning of death. Strangely death lurks in the smallest things—a pin-prick, a slip of the foot, a tiny clot of blood, the bite of a fly, etc.

II. ALL DEATHS ARE THE SIGN OF SIN. "The sting of death is sin." Sickness and death keep ever before men the fact that they are sinners.

III. SICKNESS AND DEATH WILL GO AWAY WHEN SIN GOES.

IV. AS GOD IS GRACIOUSLY WORKING FOR THE REMOVAL OF SINS, WE KNOW HE IS WORKING ALSO FOR THE REMOVAL OF SUFFERING. The day cometh when he shall be able to "wipe all tears from our eyes."—R. T.

SECTION XI. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT ON THE WORLD, AND THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH CONSEQUENT UPON IT (CH. XXXIV., XXXV.).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ch. xxxiv. and xxxv. are generally recognized as constituting a distinct prophecy, complete in itself, and only slightly connected with what precedes. The passage is, as Bishop Lowth observes, "an entire, regular, and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts, the first (ch. xxxiv.) containing a denunciation of Divine vengeance against the enemies of God; the second (ch. xxxv.) describing the flourishing state of the Church of God, consequent upon the execution of those judgments." The present chapter, which forms the first half of the poem, is wholly denunciatory. Its theme is vengeance on God's enemies generally; but, as a typical specimen, the Edomites are selected, and their punishment is depicted in the strongest colours. The awful picture, with its dark and lurid hues, prepares the way for the soft and lovely portraiture of the blest condition of the Church triumphant, which is contained in the ensuing chapter.

Ver. 1.—**Ye people**; rather, *ye peoples*. The address is couched in the widest possible terms, so as to include the whole of human-kind. **The earth . . . and all that is therein**; literally, *the earth, and the fulness thereof*. The inhabitants are no doubt intended.

Ver. 2.—**For the indignation of the Lord is upon**, etc.; rather, *for the Lord hath indignation against all the nations, and wrath against all their host*. **He hath utterly destroyed**; rather, *he hath devoted*, or *put under ban*.

Ver. 3.—**Cast out**; *i.e.* refused burial—thrown to the dogs and vultures (comp. Jer. xxii. 19; xxxvi. 30). Such treatment of the dead was regarded as a shame and a disgrace. It was on some occasions an intentional insult (Jer. xxii. 19); but here the idea is rather that it would be impossible to bury the slain on account of their number. In ancient times corpses often lay unburied on battle-fields (Herod., iii. 12). **The mountains shall be melted with their blood.** When the feelings of the prophet are excited, he shrinks from no hyperbole. Here he represents the blood of God's enemies as shed in such torrents that mountains are melted by it.

Ver. 4.—**All the host of heaven shall be dissolved.** A dissolution of the material frame of the heavens, in which the moon and stars are regarded as set, seems to be intended (comp. Matt. xxiv. 29; 2 Pet. iii. 10). The slaughter of God's enemies is here connected with the end of the world, as in the Book of Revelation (xix. 11—21). **The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll**; literally, *as a book*. Ancient books were written on long strips of paper or parchment, which, when unrolled, extended to many yards in length, but which might be rolled together "by means of one or two smooth round sticks into a very small compass." Such a rolling together of the widely extended heavens is here intended, not a shrivelling by means of heat (comp. Rev. vi. 14). **All their host shall fall** (comp. Matt. xxiv. 29, "The stars shall fall from heaven").

Ver. 5.—**My sword shall be bathed in heaven**; rather, *has been bathed*, or *has been made drunken* (ἐμεθύσθη, LXX.) *in heaven*. Some suppose a reference to the old "war in heaven," when the sword of Divine justice was drawn against the devil and his angels. Others regard the sword now to be used against the Idumeans as first, in heaven, "made drunken" with the Divine anger. **It shall come down upon Idumea** (comp. ch. lxiii. 1—6). The Edomites first showed themselves enemies of Israel when they refused to allow the Israelites, under Moses, "a passage through their border" (Numb. xx. 14—21). David subdued them (2 Sam. ix. 14); but they revolted from Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 8—10), and were thenceforward among the most bitter adversaries of the southern kingdom. They "smote Judah" in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 17), and were always ready to "shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity" (Ezek. xxxv. 5). Amos speaks of them very much in the same tone as Isaiah (Amos i. 11, 12). They ultimately "filled up the measure of their iniquities" by open rejoicing when

Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people led away captive by Nebuchadnezzar (Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Obad. 10—14; Lam. iv. 21, 22; Ezek. xxxv. 10—13). In the present passage we must regard the Edomites as representative of the enemies of God's people generally (see the introductory paragraph). **The people of my curse**; *i.e.* "the people on whom I have laid a curse"—the Edomites. Esau was to "serve" Jacob (Gen. xxv. 23; xxvii. 40), Edom to be "a possession" for Judah (Numb. xxiv. 18). God had said of Edom, probably before Isaiah uttered the present prophecy, "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof . . . but I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah" (Amos i. 11, 12). Thus Edom was under a curse.

Ver. 6.—**The sword of the Lord is filled**; or, *glutted* (Lowth). The tense is "the perfect of prophetic certainty." **It is made fat with fatness.** "Fed, as it were, on the fat of sacrifices" (see Lev. iii. 3, 4, 9, 10, 15; vii. 3, etc.). **Lambs . . . goats . . . rams.** The lesser cattle represent the lower classes of those about to be slain, while the "unicorns" and "bullocks" of ver. 7 represent the upper classes—the great men and leaders. **The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah.** This Bozrah, one of the principal cities of Idumæa, is to be distinguished from "Bozrah of Moab," which was known to the Romans as "Bostra." It lay in the hilly country to the south-east of the Dead Sea, about thirty-five miles north of Petra, and was one of the earliest settlements of the descendants of Esau, being mentioned as a well-known place in Genesis (xxxvi. 33). The threats here uttered against it are repeated by Jeremiah (xlix. 13), who says that "Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; all the cities thereof [*i.e.* the dependent cities] shall be perpetual wastes." Bozrah is probably identified with the modern *El-Busaireh*, a village of about fifty houses, occupying a site in the position above indicated, amid ruins which seem to be those of a considerable city (Burckhardt, 'Syria,' p. 407; Robinson, 'Researches in Palestine,' vol. ii. pp. 570, 571).

Ver. 7.—**The unicorns.** Bishop Lowth renders *reêm* by "wild goats;" Mr. Cheyne by "buffaloes." Probably the wild ox, a native of the trans-Jordanic region, is intended (see Mr. Houghton's paper on the animals of the Assyrian bas-reliefs, in the 'Transactions of the Society of Bibl. Archæology,' vol. v. p. 336). **Shall come down**; rather, *shall go down*; i.e. shall fall and perish (comp. Jer. l. 27).

Ver. 8.—**The day of the Lord's vengeance** (comp. ch. lxi. 2 and lxiii. 4). In all three places the "day" of God's vengeance is contrasted with the "year" of his recompense, to show how infinite is his mercy, how short-lived, comparatively speaking, his anger. Mr. Cheyne well compares the concluding clauses of the second commandment, where "retribution is declared to descend to the third and fourth generation, but mercy to the thousandth." **Recompenses for the controversy of Zion**; rather, *for the vindication of Zion*; i.e. for the maintenance of her right in the quarrel between her and her enemies.

Ver. 9.—**And the streams thereof**; *i.e.* "the streams of the land of Edom." Though Edom has no perennial rivers, it has numerous torrent-courses to carry off the winter rains (see 2 Kings iii. 20—22). These should run with pitch, instead of water. The general idea is that Edom should be visited with a destruction like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 24; comp. Jer. xlix. 18). But the prophet scarcely intends his words to be taken literally; he is making Edom a type or representation of God's enemies, and the gist of his teaching is that a dreadful vengeance, an utter destruction, will come upon all who set themselves up against the Most High. In the next verse he declares that the vengeance will be eternal (comp. ch. lxvi. 24).

Ver. 10.—**None shall pass through it for ever and ever.** There was a literal fulfilment of the prophecies against Edom to a considerable extent. Malachi, writing three hundred years after Isaiah, says that the "mountains and the heritage of Esau *were laid waste* for the dragons of the wilderness" (i. 3); and he makes the Edomites themselves exclaim, "We are *impoverished*, but we will return and build the *desolate* places" (i. 4). A certain amount of recovery must have followed; and in the Maccabee period Edom appears once more as an adversary of Israel, and an adversary of some importance (1 Macc. v. 3, 65). Gradually, however, she had to yield to the superior power of Judæa, and was even ruled by viceroys, whom the Maccabee princes nominated. One of these, Antipater, was the father of Herod the Great. From his time Idumea languished until, in the seventh century after Christ, it was overrun and conquered by the Mohammedan Arabs, who completed its ruin. It is now, and has been for above a thousand years, one of the most desolate tracts upon the earth's surface.

Ver. 11.—**The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it.** Compare the prophecy against Babylon in ch. xiv. 23. The Hebrew word translated "cormorant," is now generally regarded as designating the "pelican," while the one rendered "bittern" is thought by some to mean "hedgehog"

or "porcupine." Animals that delight in solitude are certainly meant, but the particular species is, more or less, matter of conjecture. **He shall stretch out upon it**; rather, *and one shall stretch out upon it.* The verb is used impersonally. **The line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness**; rather, *the line of desolation, and the plummet of emptiness* (comp. 2 Kings xxi. 13; Lam. ii. 8; Amos vii. 7, 8). The destruction of cities was effected by rule and measure, probably because different portions of the task were assigned to different sets of labourers, and, if the work was to be completely done, it required to be done systematically. Here, the measuring-tape and the plumb-line are to be those of *tohu* and *vohu*, or of the eternal chaos out of which God, by his word, produced order (Gen. i. 2).

Ver. 12.—**They shall call the nobles**, etc.; rather, *as for her nobles, there shall be none there for them to call to the kingdom.* The nobles are termed *horim*, probably because the right of succession to the kingdom was vested in the descendants of the Horites, from whom the Edomites took their territory (Gen. xxxvi. 20, 29, 30). These having died out, there would be no one to appoint as king.

Ver. 13.—**Thorns shall come up in her palaces.** The "palaces" of Bozrah are mentioned also by Amos (i. 12), and are threatened with destruction by fire. Amid their ruins should grow up thorns and briars. **It shall be an habitation of dragons**; or, *of jackals* (see the comment on ch. xiii. 22). **Owls**; literally, *daughters of screaming*—a description better suited to the owl than to the ostrich, which some regard as the bird meant.

Ver. 14.—**Wild beasts of the desert . . . wild beasts of the island.** In the original, *tsiyim* and *'iyim*—"wailers" and "howlers"—probably "jackals and wolves," or "wolves and hyenas." **The satyr** (see the comment on ch. xiii. 21). **The screech owl.** The word here used, *lilith*, occurs only in this place. It may be doubted whether any bird, or other animal, is meant. *Lilit* was the name of a female demon, or wicked fairy, in whom the Assyrians believed—a being thought to vex and persecute her victims in their sleep. The word is probably a derivative from *leilah*, night, and designates "the spirit of the night"—a mischievous being, who took advantage of the darkness to play fantastic tricks. A Jewish legend made Lilith the first wife of Adam, and said that, having pronounced the Divine Name as a charm, she was changed into a devil. It was her special delight to murder young children (Buxtorf, 'Lex. Rabbin.,' *ad voc.*). The prophets, when they employ poetic imagery, are not tied down to fact, but are free to use the beliefs of their contemporaries in order to heighten the force of their descriptions.

Ver. 15.—**The great owl**; rather, *the arrow-snake* (*Serpens jaculus*). **Gather under her shadow**; *i.e.* "gather her young ones under her." **There shall the vultures also be gathered**; rather, *there verily shall the vultures assemble.*

Ver. 16.—**Seek ye out of the book of the Lord.** By "the book of the Lord" some understand a collected volume of Moses and the prophets, psalmists, etc., previous to Isaiah's time, which they suppose to have existed in his day. But there is no evidence of any such collection. It is better to understand the expression of Isaiah's own prophecies, or of such a collection of them as he had made previously to the composition of the present chapter. Nothing contained in the entire book should, he says, fail of its accomplishment. Even the minutiæ of the present chapter should, each and all, have their fulfilment, though not, perhaps, in every case a literal one. **My mouth . . . his Spirit.** The "mouth" of the prophet and the "Spirit" of God, which dictates to him what he is to write, are in accord; and the Spirit will bring to pass what the mouth inspired by him has "commanded."

Ver. 17.—**He hath cast the lot for them.** God, who allots to all the nations of the earth their several countries, has now allotted Idumea to the unclean beasts and birds and reptiles which have been mentioned; henceforth it is formally assigned to them as their habitation. It is throughout to be understood that Idumea stands for the world-power which resists God and will be finally abased and put to shame.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The terrors of the Lord not to be held back by the preacher.* "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," says the great apostle of the Gentiles, "we persuade men." There is in these modern times a sickly sentimentality prevalent, which protests against the employment by preachers of arguments that address themselves to the fears of their hearers. Delicate nerves are not to be hurt by disagreeable images, or highly wrought descriptions of sufferings. Ears accustomed to flatteries are not to be shocked by suggestions that make the listeners uncomfortable. "Speak

unto us smooth things" is the universal demand, or, at any rate, the universal desire. There is considerable danger of preachers yielding to the wishes of their hearers in this respect; since it is always pleasant to be popular, and disagreeable to be thought to take a pleasure in hurting people's feelings. But the preacher of God's Word should be actuated by higher considerations. He must shape his conduct by (1) the example of great preachers in the past, as Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John, Christ himself; (2) the real needs and true interest of those whom he addresses; and (3) the declarations of Holy Scripture concerning the duty of a preacher.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF GREAT PREACHERS IN THE PAST. It is clear that Isaiah did not hold back the terrors of the Lord. Almost one-half of his prophecy is denunciatory; and the denunciations uttered are of a truly fearful character. All the great powers of the earth, and many minor powers, are threatened with the Divine vengeance, and that vengeance is depicted in very terrible language. Babylon is to be "brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (ch. xiv. 15); Assyria is to be burnt up; his glory is to be consumed; he is to be "as when a standard-bearer fainteth" (ch. x. 17, 18); Edom is to become "burning pitch" (ch. xxxiv. 9), which "shall not be quenched night nor day" (ch. xxxiv. 10); God's enemies generally are to be "slain" and "consumed," and set in a place where "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched" (ch. lxvi. 24). St. Paul persuaded men by "the terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 11). He warned them to "look for judgment and a fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 27). He reminded them that "our God is a consuming Fire" (Heb. xii. 29), and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands" (Heb. x. 31). St. John, the apostle of love, spoke of those who should "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation," and who should be "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and of the Lamb," and said that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever," and that they "have no rest day nor night" (Rev. xiv. 10, 11). It is to our blessed Lord himself that we owe the picture of the rich man tormented in the flame, and praying Abraham to send Lazarus, that he might "dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue" (Luke xvi. 24). Our Lord, moreover, adopts the dreadful imagery of Isaiah with respect to the undying worm and the fire that is never quenched (Mark ix. 44, 46, 48), and points his teaching by revealing to us the awful words of the final sentence of reprobation, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41).

II. THE REAL NEEDS OF THOSE TO WHOM PREACHING IS ADDRESSED. It cannot be denied that fear is a strong constraining motive. Human laws are enforced by penalties, the object of which is to "put men in fear." Punishment holds its place in every system of moral training, and punishment is an appeal to fear. Whatever may be the case with a chosen few, the bulk of mankind will always be more readily influenced by fear than by hope, by punishments than by rewards, by threats than by promises. The preacher cannot afford to lose the moral force which is thus put within his reach. It is hard enough to restrain men from evil courses, and induce them to lead a godly life, by freely using all the means of persuasion that are in our power. To refrain from using one of the most potent would be to fight Satan with one hand instead of two.

III. THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE CONCERNING THE DUTY OF A PREACHER. Preachers are directed to open to their disciples "the whole counsel of God." They are not to pick and choose what doctrines of Christianity they will teach. They are to deliver to others "*the* gospel," "that which they also received" (1 Cor. xv. 3)—not "another gospel" (Gal. i. 6). Now, it cannot be pretended that "the terrors of the Lord"—his wrath against sin, and its dreadful final punishment, are not as much portions of the teaching of Christ as any other. Not to preach them is to keep back a part of the message which Christ brought us from the Father. No preacher is entitled so to act, whatever the disinclination of his congregation to hear the plain teaching of Scripture on these points plainly declared. The disinclination is itself an indication of a need. Those who most dislike the doctrine of final punishment are probably those who most require to have the doctrine pressed upon them

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—17.—*The sins and punishment of Edom.* The Edomites appear in the blackest colours in the descriptions of the prophets. And in this oracle their punishment is represented in the horrible desolation of their land.

I. THEIR SINS. Their *cruelty* is above all stigmatized. At the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar they helped to plunder the city and slaughter the poor Jews. Their conduct on this occasion was never forgotten (Ps. cxxxvii.). In Obadiah we have the feelings about them brought into the clearest light (10—16). They were akin to the Jews, Esau the ancestor of the one, Jacob of the other. Their cruelty was accused as "violence against a brother." They had entered the gate of the city on the day of their brethren's calamity, to exult over them, and to join hand in hand with the conqueror and the spoiler. But the day of vengeance has come, and their violent dealing is to be returned upon their own heads (cf. ch. lxiii. 1—4; Jer. xlix. 17; Lam. iv. 21; Ezek. xxv. 13, 14; xxxv.; Amos i. 11, 12).

II. THEIR PUNISHMENT. 1. *The sword of Jehovah an emblem of Divine vengeance.* So in numerous passages (ch. xxvii. 1; xxxi. 8; xxxiv. 5; lxvi. 16; Deut. xxxii. 41, 42; Jer. xii. 12; xlvi. 10; xlvii. 6, 35—38; Zech. xiii. 7). It has been bathed in blood in heaven, that is, upon the objects of idolatrous worship, demons of the stars, etc. 2. *Sacrifice as also a figure of vengeance.* A "sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom." So sacrifice and feasting connected with judgment in Zeph. i. 7; Jer. xlvi. 10; Ezek. xxxix. 17—19. 3. *Pictures of desolation.* It is a volcanic land, and the prophet sees it deluged with lava-floods, like the guilty cities of the plain (cf. Jer. xlix. 18; Rev. xiv. 10; xix. 3). The further features of the picture are sketched in the most gloomy colours—its castles and strong places in ruins and overgrown with weeds; wild animals haunting the former abodes of man; and demons or fairies, such as are in popular superstition, hovering about the former scenes of human pride and power.

III. EDOM AS TYPICAL OF THE UNGODLY WORLD. There seems reason for supposing the prophet to have had this larger thought in mind. 1. All the nations are summoned to hear the judgments of God. 2. The desolation predicted is said to be eternal; and this is four times repeated. The general lessons, then, of Divine judgments may be repeated in connection with this awe-inspiring picture. 1. *The particular example of Divine judgment* illustrates the *general truth.* That which concerns the people in this respect concerns mankind. The beam which strikes this or that object strikes many others in its rebound. 2. *Destruction and discrimination in the judgments* are the mark of Providence. When God strikes an individual, or a nation, the conclusion is that they were aimed at. 3. *An utter doom the consequence of utter sin.* None can think of the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of Edom, without a shudder, without hearing the reverberations of the thunder from Sinai; without attending to the appeal, "Break off your sins by righteousness!" "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!"—J.

Vers. 1—15.—*The Divine indignation.* The strong, pictorial language of the prophet brings into bold relief some truths respecting God's indignation of which it is needful to be occasionally reminded. We learn—

I. THAT IT IS A CONSTANT FACTOR IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein . . . for the indignation of the Lord is *upon all nations,*" etc. (vers. 1, 2). It is seldom, perhaps never, the duty of the Christian minister to employ such terms as those used in this prophecy (vers. 3, 5, 6). But it *is* his duty to make it clear that benevolence and its kindred attributes do not *constitute* the character of God; that, though it is a truth of inestimable price that "God is love," it is also true that "our God is a consuming Fire;" that though it is a fact that "justice and judgment are his strange work," it is also a fact that God does pour out his indignation "upon all nations;" that "the hand of the Lord is against them that do evil," that he will render "indignation and wrath . . . upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Religious doctrine, like all other truth, must be seen in its true proportions, or it will

be misconceived. To represent God's indignation against sin as the chief element in his character is essentially false; to represent his love as absorbing or eclipsing his hatred of sin and his intention to punish the guilty is also, if not equally, false. The same lips which opened to invite every weary wanderer to return to him and find rest in his happy service declared that many of the children of privilege should be shut out of the kingdom of heaven. To the Thrice-Holy One sin is now "that abominable thing which his soul hateth," and against it he will always express, both in word and deed, his righteous indignation.

II. THAT IT IS SOMETIMES POSITIVELY OVERWHELMING IN ITS EFFECTS. "He hath utterly destroyed them" (ver. 2); "Their slain shall be cast out . . . the mountains shall be melted with their blood" (ver. 3); "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved," etc. (ver. 4); "The sword of the Lord is filled with blood . . . the Lord hath a great slaughter in the land" (ver. 6). God is sometimes "terrible in his doings toward the children of men." The flood swept away the race; the fires of heaven consumed the cities of the plain; the avenging armies destroyed the population of the guilty land. And now the corrupt nation pays for its apostasy and its crimes the penalty of defeat and humiliation; the degenerate Church also suffers feebleness, decline, perhaps positive extinction; and the debased, hardened man finds himself bereft of every good, pursued and overtaken by gathering evils, having nothing to hope and everything to fear. God is "slow to wrath," he gives opportunities for repentance, he welcomes and restores the penitent; but on the impenitent and unreturning sinner he lays his hand of retribution, and alas for those who find from their own experience that "the way of transgressors is hard"!

III. THAT IT IS OFTEN EXCITED BY OFFENCES COMMITTED AGAINST HIS PEOPLE. "The day of the Lord's vengeance" is "the year of recompenses *for the controversy of Zion*" (see Numb. xx. 20; 2 Chron. xxi. 8—10; xxv. 12; Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Obad. 10—16). Our Divine Lord has told us that to cause *one of his little ones* to stumble is a heinous offence in his sight; that, inasmuch as we do not our duty to one of the least of his brethren, we withhold what is due to himself. The persecution of the people of God has taken many forms beside that of slaughter or imprisonment; they who resort to it must reckon on a very serious measure of Divine disapproval.

IV. THAT IT SHOWS ITSELF IN ITS SADDEST FORM IN A COMPLETE DEGENERACY. "From generation to generation it shall lie waste" (ver. 10 and vers. 11—15). It is a sad descent, a melancholy instance of degeneracy, when the thickly peopled city is abandoned by mankind, is untrodden by the human foot, and becomes the haunt of the wild beast, of the obscene bird, and of the "night-monster." The last and worst penalty which God's indignation inflicts on the children of men is *utter spiritual degeneracy*—the *mind* losing its intellectual faculties, and becoming imbecile through vice and folly; the *will* broken down and become helpless, bent and swayed with every breeze; the *heart* hardened so that all feeling of pity and affection has departed; the *soul* foregoing and forgetting its higher aspirations and sunk into the condition in which it craves nothing better than worldly increase or animal indulgence. Sad as is the loss of position or estate when the powerful prince becomes a menial or the wealthy merchant becomes a beggar, immeasurably sadder in the sight of Heaven is that spiritual degeneracy in which, as the inevitable wages of sin, a human spirit loses all its nobility of character and becomes an outcast in creation, mere driftwood on the ocean, the sport of the devouring waves.—C.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The Divine Word and human woe.* These words are called forth by—

I. ANTICIPATED INCREDULITY. The prophet thinks that the solemn threatenings he has uttered will not be credited. He seems to say, "You heard these awful utterances, but you will not heed them; you will indulge the thought that they are nothing more than a fanatic's dream; you think in your hearts that they will never be fulfilled; you imagine that you can afford to disregard them; but you are mistaken, there will be the closest correspondence between what is written in 'the book of the Lord' and what shall one day be witnessed in the experiences of Edom." There is a great deal of unwarranted incredulity in the hearts of men respecting the penal purposes of God. He has spoken, has warned men, has clearly intimated what will be the consequences of crime, of vice, of ungodliness, of the rejection of the gospel of Christ, of unfaithful-

ness and disloyalty in the Christian life. But men's hearts are hard, their understanding is veiled so that they do not see. 1. They delude themselves with the thought that, though other men suffer the penalty of their sin or folly, they will, in some way, escape. 2. Or they deceive themselves by holding up before their minds one-half only of the truth; they dwell on the graciousness and mercy of God, and act as if he were not as righteous as he is tender, as pure as he is pitiful. 3. Or they misrepresent the character of their misdeeds to their own minds, persuading themselves that they are slight and venial, however serious they may be in the sight of God. It is a melancholy fact, calling for utmost vigilance, that the frequent repetition of sin and ultimate familiarity with it reduce its apparent guiltiness to the smallest fraction.

II. THE PROPHETIC ASSURANCE. The prophet says, "Compare what is written in the 'book of the Lord' with the facts, and they shall tally with one another—not one shall fail; for the command shall go from heaven, and these wild beasts, whose presence has been threatened as a dire scourge and as the mark of saddest degeneracy, shall possess the holy land, and 'from generation to generation shall dwell therein;' the very worst that has been foretold shall happen, and what the Divine Word has predicted shall be endured in its most grievous form." They who now speak for God have to give similar assurance: they have to warn men that the worst must be expected if they remain impenitent and disobedient; they have to insist upon it, sorrowfully but emphatically, that everything threatened in the "book of the Lord" will compare with the experiences of the persistently obdurate and disloyal. It is their duty to show: 1. That, sooner or later, men may expect the righteous retribution of God to overtake them; "the sword of heaven is not in haste to smite, nor yet doth linger;" that, though God keeps silence long, he *will* reprove men, and set their sins in order before their eyes (Ps. l. 21). 2. That, if not here, yet hereafter, the judgments of God will reach the guilty, and then, if not now, "every one will receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." 3. That Divine retribution will take some other form if it come not in the one men have expected. There are other "wild beasts," and worse, than those which are here referred to (vers. 14, 15). There are other evils, and worse, than the poverty, the diseases, the mortality, from which sinners shrink and from which they may long escape. There are evils which haunt the heart, calamities which afflict the soul, ruin which reaches the character, death which overtakes the *man himself*,—judgments which God in righteousness "hath commanded," and which more than fulfil the saddest and strongest word he has instructed his spokesmen to employ.—C.

Ver. 1.—*God's dealing with one nation for the sake of many.* "Let the earth hear." This chapter, with the following one, constitutes a distinct prophecy, and forms the completion of the first part of Isaiah's work. This chapter further illustrates the point which has been again and again enforced, that "no man liveth unto himself;" a man's successes, achievements, failures, losses, troubles, are all for the sake of others. Every man's life is really vicarious, and this truth is pictured for us in the history and relations of nations. It is plain that no nation liveth unto itself; it is inspiration or warning to other nations around. A man's experience, and a nation's experience, can only to a very limited extent help the man or the nation; but it can most materially help *other* men and *other* nations. Therefore "let the earth hear" what God will do unto Edom. For Edom is principally referred to here, as the peculiarly inveterate and malignant enemy of ancient Israel. As we know that Edom submitted to Assyria, it is quite possible that they played a part in Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, in his attack on Jerusalem; so the prophet foresees Divine judgments falling on Edom as soon as Sennacherib is removed. The historical relations of Edom and Israel should be carefully studied. It is thought that from the historical reference to one nation the prophetic vision advances to the end of the world and the final judgment. We may keep to the lessons which arise out of the purely historical association. Dealing with one or with a few, *for the sake of the many*, has been God's universal law of relationship with men. It is the law of elections, or rather *selections*, the calling out of specially fitted ones to be workers for, or examples to, all. We readily recognize this law, as the responsibility of talents, positions, or opportunities; but it is less usual to see that it equally applies to disabilities, failures, and judgments. Men work for others, and men suffer for others.

Nations gain power for the sake of others; nations are crushed and humbled for the sake of others. Illustration of this point may run along three lines.

I. A MAN'S OR A NATION'S GENIUS IS NOT FOR SELF. "The earth must hear," and know about it. All gifts are trusts.

II. A MAN'S OR A NATION'S SUFFERINGS ARE NOT FOR SELF. The most striking illustration in a man is *Job*; in a nation, the people of Israel. All sufferers bear their part in the moral education, the redemption, of the race.

III. A MAN'S OR A NATION'S JUDGMENTS ARE NOT FOR SELF. We are not punished for our own sakes alone. Judgments follow us for the sake of the on-lookers.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*Divine indignations.* It is important that we use the words which express the severe side of Divine dealings with great judgment and carefulness. We should resist the tendency of modern times to eliminate all the severer features from the conception of the Divine Being. Dr. Bushnell thus expresses it: "Our age is at the point of apogee from all the robuster notions of Deity." Our fathers made too much of the Divine "wrath;" but we are in danger of making too little. "There is a considerable variety of words that we may use to express this sterner side of the Divine dealing —'wrath,' 'anger,' 'indignation,' 'fury,' 'vengeance,' 'judgment,' 'justice,' and the like, but they are all more or less defective. *Wrath* is the term most commonly used in our translation, and it is really the best, if only we can hold it closely enough to the idea of a moral, in distinction from a merely animal, passion; else, failing in this, it will connect associations of unregulated temper that are painful, and as far as possible from being sacred. It requires in this view, like the safety-lamps of the miners, a gauze of definition round it, to save it from blazing into an explosion too fierce to serve the purposes of light." *Indignation* is the most unexceptionable word, and it is to one point in connection with it that attention is now invited. It is especially suited to express the feeling of God, because it applies to *wrong-doers* rather than to *wrong actions*. It links on to the view that the essence of sin is not a wrong thing done, but the wrong *will* out of which the doing came. We cannot get up indignation merely at things done; our feeling settles and centres on the bad doers. In all cases of sin we should keep quite clearly before us that the Divine concern is not, supremely, the disturbed circumstances, but the sinners and the sufferers. Divine power can readjust and rearrange all our conditions and circumstances, just as that power can preserve the order, and put straight the broken or deflected order, of creation. It is God's own condition, laid upon himself, that moral states can only be reached by moral means. Divine indignations, as they concern moral beings, find expression in the persuasions of Divine judgments; these fall on the man himself, or they may fall on his substitute and representative; and so is opened up for treatment the mystery of Divine indignations resting on Christ for us, for our sakes.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The Lord's controversy.* "The year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." Fausset says, "When Judah was captive in Babylon, Edom in every way insulted over her fallen mistress, and killed many of those Jews whom the Chaldeans had left, and hence was held guilty of fratricide by God (Esau, their ancestor, having been brother to Jacob): this was the cause of the denunciations of the prophets against Edom (ch. lxiii. 1; Jer. xlix. 7; Ezek. xxv. 12—14; xxxv. 3—15; Joel iii. 19; Amos i. 11, 12; Obad. 8, 10, 12—18; Mal. i. 3, 4)." The Israelites were familiar with the law of retaliation. It was the pervading law of men as gathered into tribes, and their basis-idea of justice. Moses adopted it for his legal system, but qualified its operation, preparing the way for an entire change from personal retaliation for offences, to a calm, unbiassed, systematic consideration of the case of all wrong-doers, and adjustment of punishments on a fixed scale. So far as the idea of retaliation was *right* as between men, it may be applied as between God and men, and it is introduced in this verse. Edom took advantage of Israel's weakness to act unbrotherly, and to encroach. Therefore the Lord has a controversy with Edom; and he will surely retaliate, bringing judgments upon them.

I. RETALIATION AS A PRIMITIVE IDEA OF JUSTICE. "It was an ethical maxim, extensively accepted among ancient nations, that men must suffer the same pains that they have inflicted on others. The later Greeks called this the *Neoptolemic* use, from

the circumstance that Neoptolemus was punished in the same way in which he had sinned. He had murdered at the altar, and at the altar he was murdered." Show how natural the retaliatory idea seems to children. The old sentiment still lingers in men's minds, so that we have great satisfaction in hearing of cases wherein Providence deals the blow to men which they have dealt to others.

II. RETALIATION DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF THE CHARACTER OF AVENGERS. It would be a safe working principle if men were *good*, and not subject to unworthy passions. These make men do more than retaliate.

III. RETALIATION AS A PART OF DIVINE DEALING. He has a "year of recompenses"—a time when he will make a man's violent doing fall upon his own pate. All sin is wrong done to him; it calls for due recompense. It must be precisely shown how far the idea of retaliation may be applied to God.

IV. RETALIATION BY GOD IS GUARANTEED BY THE CHARACTER OF GOD. It can never be the expression of personal feeling. It can never be unqualified or excessive. It can never be without its own aim to secure the final good of those on whom it must fall.—R. T.

Vers. 13—15.—*The witness of desolate lands.* In every age there have been such. In the forefront of the world's history there was desolated Sodom and Gomorrah, witnessing to Israelites, and witnessing to all the world. Our Lord, as a Teacher, called attention to its message. Attention may be directed to Babylon, Tyre, Palestine; and for modern times, to the decay of the commercial cities of Italy, to Holland, etc.—countries which may be spoken of as "desolate" when compared with former prosperities. Edom, or Idumea, is the country alluded to by the prophet, and travellers describe very forcibly the completeness of its desolation. "Captains Irby and Mangles tell us that the Arabs about Akaba are a very bad people, notorious robbers, and at war with all others. The desolation of the land is utter and perpetual—a terrible monument of the Divine displeasure against wickedness and idolatry. The whole land lies under a curse; the ruins of its cities of rock, and the remains of architectural skill and ingenuity, attest its former greatness, while they set forth the solemn fact that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Dr. Robinson says, "A more frightful desert it had hardly been our lot to behold. Now and then a lone shrub of the Ghudah was almost the only trace of vegetation. The mountains beyond presented a most uninviting and hideous aspect; precipices and naked conical peaks of chalky and gravelly formation rising one above another without a sign of life or vegetation." Dr. Olin speaks of it as in "a state of desolation and ruin the most absolute and irretrievable, such as probably no portion of the globe once populous and fertile now exhibits." What, then, is the message which such a desolate land bears for all the world and for us? This may be worked out and illustrated under the following divisions.

I. IT WITNESSES FOR GOD. "He is known by the judgments which he executeth." There is evidently more than a mere operation of natural forces—there is Divine direction of natural forces to effect Divine ends. This may get more familiar illustration from Palestine, which is a country with God's curse on it.

II. IT WITNESSES FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." Righteousness is sure defence, security, stability. If a land is desolate, it calls to all other lands, saying, "Hold fast by righteousness." Lands fall through the iniquity of the peoples.

III. IT WITNESSES FOR JUDGMENT. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Sooner or later every kingdom, every nation, will find that God will arise and vindicate himself, and render a reward to the proud.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Appeal to the Word.* "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." Literally, the word is "from upon the book," meaning, "Search it from the top to the bottom; and in so doing you will find abundant illustrations of Divine threatenings faithfully executed." "Be sure that the desolation which is here preannounced to the literal Edom, and which is foretold in other parts of Scripture, as the doom of God's enemies, will be exactly fulfilled in all those who imitate their temper, in rebellion against God, and in cruelty and treachery to Israel."

I. ALL GOD'S WRITTEN WORD WILL BE FOUND TO AGREE TOGETHER. It is the

exceeding marvel of it, the best evidence of Divine inspiration, that, though written by different men, at different times, and in different lands, on all main points of revelation it is at absolute agreement; and contradictions, which men may fancy they find, gain easy solution. Moral principles, religious teachings, representations of Divine dealings, are the same throughout. This may be illustrated in specific cases. Take the idea of God as One, and as a Spirit; or take the Divine relation to idolatry; or take the response of God to penitence; in each instance search the book, and you will surely find a uniform and harmonious testimony. Or take the case of the text, and show the certainty that judgment will follow threatening, if penitence do not intervene.

II. ALL GOD'S WRITTEN WORD IS IN HARMONY WITH HIS SPOKEN WORD. This seems to be the point of Isaiah's appeal. He spoke this denunciation of Edom by word of mouth; it had not yet been written down, so he pleads thus: "Test it as much as you please by the written Word that you possess: it is all one; God spoke then; God speaks by me. The vision is true. The judgment is sure." The condition of listening to any one who professes to have a message and revelation from God is that they shall speak in harmony with the Word of God which we possess. "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Distinction may wisely be made between the mere details of the Word, and the great truths and principles of the Word. These latter alone can be used as tests; and very much of the sect-separation of Christianity has come through overvaluing, and unskilfully using, mere biblical details. All doctrine, all morals—but no science—can be, and should ever be, fully tested by scriptural principles.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

VERS. 1—10.—THE GLORY OF THE LAST TIMES. On the punishment of God's enemies will follow the peace, prosperity, and glory of his Church. Previously, the Church is in affliction, waste, and desolate. Its enemies once removed, destroyed, swept out of the way, it rises instantly in all its beauty to a condition which words are poor to paint. The highest resources of the poetic art are called in to give some idea of the glory and happiness of the final Church of the redeemed.

Ver. 1.—**The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them**; rather, *the wilderness, and the dry place, shall be glad.* The Church, that has been long wasted and kept under by the wicked, shall, at their destruction, feel a sense of relief, and so of joy. **The desert shall rejoice, and blossom.** The first result of the joy shall be a putting forth of lovely products. Blossoms, beautiful as the rose or the narcissus (Kay), shall spring up all over the parched ground, and make it a parterre of flowers. The blossoms are either graces unknown in the time of affliction, or saintly characters of a new and high type.

Ver. 2.—**It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing**; rather, *with dancing and singing.* Dancing and singing were the ordinary manifestations of religious joy (Exod. xv. 1, 20, 21; Judg. xi. 34; xxi. 19—21; 2 Sam. vi. 5, 14, 15; Ps. xxx. 11, etc.), and would naturally follow the great deliverance of the Church from the power of its enemies. The clause is a touch of realism intruded into a prolonged metaphor or allegory, and is quite in the manner of Isaiah (comp. ch. xiv. 7; xxvi. 1; xxx. 32, etc.). **The glory of Lebanon . . . the excellency of Carmel and Sharon**; *i.e.* productiveness of all kinds, of abundant harvests, fruits, and flowers, and forest trees (comp. ch. x. 18, 19, 33, 34; xxxii. 15)—a resumption and prolongation of the metaphor in ver. 1. **They shall see the glory of the Lord.** The culminating joy and delight and blessedness of the Church shall be the vision of God—either the spiritual perception of his presence (Matt. v. 8; Rom. i. 20) or the actual beatific vision (1 Cor. xiii. 12; Rev. xxi. 11, 23; xxii. 4), the first during the probation period, the second in the state of final bliss.

Ver. 3.—**Strengthen ye the weak hands.** In the Church of the redeemed there will be "weak" brethren as well as strong, "feeble" as well as healthful (see 1 Cor. iii. 1; Gal. vi. 1; Heb. v. 12—14). God, by the mouth of his prophet, calls on the strong to impart of their strength to their weaker brethren, uplifting their "weak hands," as Aaron and Hur did those of Moses (Exod. xvii. 12), and "confirming" or sustaining their "feeble knees." So St. Paul: "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. xv. 1).

Ver. 4.—**Say to them that are of a fearful heart.** There will be fearful and trembling hearts always, even among the saints of God. These are to be encouraged and assured that

God will come to their aid, will avenge them of their spiritual enemies, reward their efforts to serve him, and in the end "save" them. **He will come and save you**; rather, *he will come himself to save you.* There is One alone who can save, and he must do it *himself*, and, to do it, he must "come" to us. The words were at once an announcement of the Incarnation, and a promise to every trembling, doubting heart—a promise of *direct* Divine assistance, of the presence of God within us, of help potent to save. The predominant thought of the prophet appears to have been Messianic, and hence the burst of glorious prophecy which follows—a burst of prophecy most inadequately expounded of the time of the return from the Captivity.

Vers. 5, 6.—**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.** In the literal sense, our Lord claims these prophecies to himself and his earthly career, when he says to the disciples of John the Baptist, "Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see, the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear" (Matt. xi. 4, 5); but they have doubtless a further spiritual sense, in which they belong to the whole period of his mediatorial kingdom, and are correlative to former utterances of the prophet, in which the blinded eyes and deaf ears and stammering tongues of God's people had been spoken of and made the subject of complaint (see ch. vi. 10; xxix. 10, etc.). Our Lord's miracles of bodily healing, performed during the three years of his earthly ministry, were types and foreshadowings of those far more precious miracles of spiritual healing, which the great Physician is ever performing on the sick and infirm of his Church, by opening the eyes of their understandings, and unstopping the deaf ears of their hearts, and loosening the strings of their tongues to hymn his praise, and stirring their paralyzed spiritual natures to active exertions in his service. Doubtless Isaiah, or the Spirit which guided him, intended to point to both these classes of miracles, and not to one of them only, as characteristic of the Messiah's kingdom.

Ver. 6.—**For in the wilderness shall waters break out.** The wilderness of humanity shall be renovated by a large effluence of God's grace (comp. ch. xxx. 25; xxxii. 2; xli. 18; xliii. 19; John vii. 37, 38).

Ver. 7.—**The parched ground shall become,** etc.; rather, *the glistening sand.* That hot glow of the parched desert soil, which produces the mirage, shall be replaced by a real lake of cool water. Illusive imitations of goodness shall give way to the display of genuine virtues and excellences. **In the habitation of dragons**; or, according to some, *of jackals*—the driest and most desolate of all places. Shall be **grass with reeds and rushes**; *i.e.* "shall be a luxuriant vegetation, like that on the banks of the Nile" (comp. vers. 1, 2).

Ver. 8.—**And an highway shall be there, and a way** (comp. ch. xxx. 21). There shall be a clear "way" marked out in which all shall be bound to walk—a "strait and narrow way" doubtless (Matt. vii. 14), but one not readily missed. The way shall be **called The way of holiness.** It shall be that path through the dangers and difficulties of life which holiness points out and requires. **The unclean shall not pass over it.** It is tempting to imagine that there is here a reference to the famous *chinvat peretu* of the Zoroastrians—the "bridge of the gatherer"—along which all souls had to pass in order to reach the abode of the blessed, but which the souls of the wicked never succeeded in passing ('Ancient Monarchies,' vol. ii. p. 339). The 'bridge of the gatherer" is, however, in the other world, not in this world; but Isaiah's "highway" is here. It is that right course of life, which "the unclean" do not follow, though they might do so if they chose, but which the righteous follow to their great gain and advantage. **But it shall be for those**; rather, as in the margin, *but he shall be with them*; God, *i.e.* shall be with those who seek to walk in the way, and not to err from it. He shall direct them, support them, sustain their footsteps. **The wayfaring men**; rather, *they that walk in the way*—that make up their minds to try to walk in it. **Though fools**; *i.e.* however simple and unlearned they may be—"Ne simplicissimi quidem" (Rosenmüller). **Shall not err therein**; shall not wander from the way through mere simplicity. **It shall be** easy to find, difficult to miss.

Ver. 9.—**No lion shall be there.** No great tyrannical power, like Assyria (Nah. ii. 11, 12) or Babylon, shall arrest the energies of the Church, take it captive, or enslave it. **No ravenous beast** shall make it his prey. In proportion as the Church is holy (ver. 8) it shall be free from the molestation of bloody persecutors (see ch. xi. 9). **The redeemed**—those whom God has purchased for his own (Exod. vi. 6; Hos. xiii. 14)—shall be free to walk there, untroubled by cruel enemies. There is an under-current of comparison between the blessedness of the last times and the existing troubles of Israel, still threatened by Sennacherib.

Ver. 10.—**The ransomed of the Lord shall return.** The blessedness of the last times would be incomplete to Jewish ideas without this crowning feature. There had already been a great dispersion of the faithful (ch. i. 7—9); there was to be a still greater one (ch. xi. 11); Israel could not be content or happy until her "outcasts" were recalled,

"the dispersed of Judah gathered together from the four corners of the earth" (ch. xi. 12). The return here prophesied is again announced, in almost the same words, in ch. li. 11. **With songs** (see the comment on ver. 2). **Everlasting joy upon their heads!** Anointed, as it were, with "the oil of gladness" (Ps. xlv. 7) for ever and ever. **Sorrow and sighing shall flee away** (comp. ch. xxv. 8; Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The glory of the Church not temporal greatness, but spiritual perfection.* Amid the wealth of metaphor which Isaiah employs to depict the final prosperity, glory, and happiness of the Church, it is remarkable how little use is made of any images drawn from the conditions or circumstances of earthly grandeur. Images of natural beauty are principally employed—the shady forest, the spreading cedar tree, the rich luxuriance of arable and pasture land, the choice beauty of the most lovely among flowers, the placid lake, the pellucid rill, the gushing fountain. These raise no ideas of earthly greatness or temporal dominion. They point, by what may be called the laws of prophetic language, to two main features of spiritual life, (1) abounding grace granted to the Church freely from above—a supply copious, unlimited, inexhaustible, such that the cry may be confidently raised, "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat" (ch. lv. 1); and (2) abundant fruit borne by her members in their several stations—fruit of various kinds and of various degrees of excellency, but all "good fruit," spontaneously brought forth from ungrudging hearts, hearts desirous of showing forth their love and gratitude to their Maker and Redeemer. Beyond these two main characteristic features of the Church of the redeemed, we descry further—first, a power of working miracles (vers. 5, 6), physical or spiritual, or both; and secondly, a gift of spiritual insight, whereby the redeemed are enabled to penetrate through the dense veil wherewith material things overlay the great realities that are behind them, and to discern through all the "glory and excellency" of the Most High (ver. 2). The redeemed seek for no external dominion—their efforts are, primarily, to walk themselves in "the way of holiness" (ver. 8); secondarily, to "strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees" of their brethren (ver. 3); and, finally, to realize to themselves, by continual meditation and study of his works, the goodness and greatness, the "glory and excellency," of their Lord and God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Glories of the Messianic age.* This is a picture of the happy and glorious condition of Israel after the return from Captivity. Nature is beheld rejoicing with man; and the whole scene is suffused with the light of a universal spiritual joy.

I. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NATURAL WORLD. The desert will rejoice "like the narcissus," the beautiful white flower found in abundance in spring-time in the Plain of Sharon. A ringing musical cry shall break out from those solitudes. The beauty of the most favoured spots, of Carmel and Sharon, shall be diffused over the whole. In poetic pathos a feeling is lent to Nature which does not really exist in her. There is a deep truth, not of the reason, but of the heart, in this mood. Inanimate Nature is incapable either of joy or of sorrow, of exultation or depression. This our reason tells us. But we are all something more than cold rationalists in this matter. We take back from Nature impressions which we have first lent to her, and suppose we have borrowed them. This has been called the "pathetic fallacy," and there is a truth in the fallacy better than that of syllogistic reasoning. To the lover Nature looks love, and whispers of love; to the desponding temper her expression is a frown, her tones are inspirations of lament; she wears a nuptial robe for the happy bridegroom, and a pall for the mourner; silent and morose to the eyes of him who is cast down in the sense of Divine wrath, it breaks forth into jubilant song for the ears of him whose heart overflows with the sense of the redeeming mercy of God. "There is not the least flower but seems to hold up its head, and look pleasantly, in the secret sense of the goodness of its heavenly Maker. This silent rhetoric, though we cannot hear, but only see it, is so full and expressive,

that David thought he spoke neither impropriety nor nonsense, in a strong line, when he said, 'even the valleys break forth into singing.'" It is a song of praise and thanksgiving, a song of joy and triumph in the "glory of Jehovah," the manifestations of his creative and renewing powers, the liberal effusions of his goodness, even upon the lowest parts of the creation.

II. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE HUMAN WORLD. 1. *Weakness made strong*—under the figure of the nerving up of languid hands and of tottering knees. Languor, dulness, the privation of power, are symptomatic of the absence of vital energy, alike in the physical and the moral sphere. People may be seemingly weak and impotent, not because they want the organs for action, but because the *inspiration to action* is wanting. A life without defined activity is hardly worth the name. In the fixed light of the eye, the prompt hand, the willing foot, we see signs of the Divine *afflatus* upon a man. The sails have caught the favouring breeze, while others lie becalmed. But there is always some part for the *will*. To him that hath shall be given; and the paradox is true, power comes to those who exert it. 2. *Despair exchanged for confidence.* Despair unfits alike for human and Divine service. Men are moved to duty by the hope of good or by the fear of evil. These motives cannot avail one who does not believe that his state can be either bettered or worsened. The man becomes careless of his happiness, indifferent to salvation. The biblical medicine for despair is the *firm insistence on the message of salvation.* God is coming—is on the way, to requite, to redeem, to deliver. How careful should preachers be not to force men into a "preternatural melancholy," by an unskilful handling of the Word of truth, by indiscreet severity, by dwelling too much on the dark themes of human depravity and predestination! 3. *The removal of human infirmities and limitations.* Blindness, deafness, lameness, dumbness, are symbolic of all obstructions in the soul to the entrance of light, and music, and power, and fluency. One great outflow of the Spirit sweeps all these hindrances to enjoyment and to activity away. Near to us is a God of infinite fulness; all about us is a world of beauty, strength, and joy; but we are "straitened in ourselves." Life is full of illusions, which tempt us forward with all the power and promise of reality. These are like the mirage of the desert—a seeming sheet of water in the distance, with its offer of refreshment to the pilgrim; in fact, an optical deception. But these illusions bear a certain relation to truth. For we cannot believe that the Almighty has planted a spring of error in the very mechanism of our fancy. Our minds were made for truth and tend towards truth, even through hallucinations. "The mirage shall become a lake."

III. THE REFORMATION OF RELIGION. There will be a "raised way," called "The Holy Way." It will be exempt from all that is unclean; it will be so clear and straight, that even the simple-minded cannot go astray; a secure and peaceful way, undisturbed by the furious beasts of ravening and destruction. Its every stage will be marked with joy, as singing pilgrims pass along it; and the sighs of sorrow will die away in the distance. It is a picture of true evangelical religion, as it is revived among the peoples, from epoch to epoch, and of its blessed effects. True religion is an *elevating* thing; nobility of manner and refinement of taste go hand-in-hand with it. It is a *holy* thing; and distinction of characters and classes, of tastes and pursuits, must appear wherever it comes. Its doctrine is simple, intelligible, yet sublime. "Justification by faith" can be understood and received by the humblest mind, while the most powerful intellect must exert itself to rise to the serene height of the truth. It is a way of *gentleness* and *peace*, unvexed by the furious storms of controversy, sheltering timid souls. It is a way of *freedom* and of *joy*, and it leads to a fixed destination—a celestial place, an eternal kingdom, a city that cannot be removed, whose Builder and Maker is God.—J.

Ver. 3.—*Inspirations to energy.* "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." It is not enough to be sorry for the woes of others. Sympathy may be a sort of mental "minor," wherewith we simply soothe ourselves. We must be earnest and inspirational. Pity must be practical. "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand!" We have plenty of critics and satirists; we want men who will help *to save.*

I. WE MAY STRENGTHEN BY OUR WORDS. "*Say* to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." Tell a sorrow to some persons, and they draw a picture of still darker possibilities, and so feed the already gloomy fancies of the mind. But it is

possible to give "cheer," instead—to record God's great deliverances to ourselves, and tell of all his wondrous works. Thus we may put the brightness of hope into the sky, and help to chase the dark clouds away. "Say." We have all the faculty of quickly telling *bad* news; let us tell the "good news" of God's gracious kingdom.

II. WE CAN CHEER THE HEART. That is the centre of life. We may not be able to lift the burden, but we may strengthen our brother's hands by energizing his heart. It is wonderful what a few depressing influences will accomplish. Some are more sensitive than others, and are easily cast down. "Do not my words do good?" says God; for *they* reach at once to the inner man. Blessed angels of help are words that go to the heart. No man is so great but sympathy can cheer him; no man is so weak but he may be made heroic by holy inspirations!

III. WE CAN HELP THE PILGRIMAGE. The knees are feeble; for it is a "tiring" journey to many. They are very weary. Disappointments have multiplied; fountains have dried up in the desert; friends have died, and, like Naomi, they went out full, and are returning home empty. We are all pilgrims; and the statesman's steps often tire as well as the poor student seeking after his first ideal. In the spiritual pilgrimage, too, we often faint and fail. The way is hard. We are disappointed with ourselves. It may be that some soul was just turning back when we strengthened the feeble knees by our own eager pressing forward, even when tired and faint.

How much thus depends on our own Christ-like disposition! We cannot do all this if we are insolent, quarrelsome, or hard. The very duties the gospel enjoins manifest what a lofty ideal of character the gospel requires.—W. M. S.

Ver. 4.—*Tremor of spirit.* "Say to them that are of a fearful heart." This implies that *fear* will be a necessary element in our life. All depends on the heart. Fear increases with experience.

I. THY GOD REIGNETH TO SALVATION. His power is in *this* direction. He is *God.* He is *thy* God—the God of *thy* salvation. 1. *It is an empire over sin.* All its agencies and influences. 2. *It is an empire over hearts.* Because it is connected with the cross! 3. *It is an empire over enemies.* There is no Manichean universe of equally divided forces. The Lord is King.

II. THY GOD REIGNETH TO CONSOLATION. He is human as well as Divine. 1. *He is Lord of circumstance.* 2. *He is Lord of condition.* He can and does extend his pity to the weak and the poor. 3. *He is Lord of dissolution.* For death is in his hands.

III. THY GOD REIGNETH TO GLORIFICATION. All things make manifest: 1. *His praise.* 2. *His perfections.* 3. *His permanence.* "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."

IV. THY GOD REIGNETH TO SUBJUGATION. All enemies under his feet. 1. Power to *control.* 2. Power to *educe* good out of evil. 3. Power to *raise* and to *cast down.*

V. THY GOD REIGNETH TO ADORATION. His kingship will evoke the worshipping homage of all creation. 1. Angels adore him. 2. Saints adore him. Heaven shall ring with the glad acclaim of a great multitude that no man can number. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."—W. M. S.

Vers. 1, 2, 5—7.—*Transformation by the truth.* Accepting these words as Messianic in their scope, we may treat them as descriptive of that most blessed transformation which is effected, in the individual man and in the nation, by the gospel. When the truth of Christ is made efficacious by the Spirit of God, and has had time to work out its true results, there will be found—

I. ILLUMINATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Darkness of mind, deafness of soul, have prevailed; the spirit has been insensible to all that is most beautiful and harmonious, most precious, in the universe. But *then* shall things appear as they are. Men shall "see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." In the Father, the Friend, the Sanctifier, the Refuge of the human soul, men will recognize him who is worthy of their trust, their love, their search.

II. GRATITUDE OF HEART. Instead of the "guilty silence," so often and so long maintained by men under the reign of sin, "the tongue of the dumb will sing" psalms

of grateful praise to the Divine Author of all being, to the bountiful Giver of every good and perfect gift. The mouth will be full of song because the heart will be full of thankful remembrances.

III. STRENGTH OF SOUL. "Then shall the lame leap as an hart." Instead of the moral feebleness and incapacity which showed itself in painful spiritual inactivity, the soul will go forth, with all its renewed and regenerated powers, to do God's work, to bear witness to his Name, to work in his vineyard.

IV. LOVELINESS AND FRUITFULNESS OF LIFE. "The desert shall . . . blossom as the rose; . . . the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel," etc. 1. Instead of bareness and unsightliness—the invariable product of sin in its final outworkings—there shall be *spiritual beauty*. There shall be "the beauty of holiness," "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;" all that is attractive and entrancing to the changed and cultivated judgment of the good and wise. 2. Instead of fruitlessness there shall be *fertility*. The desert shall "blossom abundantly." Holy, devoted life will be spent in the service of a present Saviour and for a sin-stricken world. We shall abound in help, in healing, in blessing.

V. PREVAILING JOY. The whole strain of the passage is jubilant, and it speaks of the desert "rejoicing with joy and singing." Sin and sadness are most intimately associated; even if they are not so inseparably allied as to be always seen together, they are so essentially connected that when one appears the other is sure to follow. It is a guilty world that knows so much of disappointment, of regret, of grief, of shame. But when the truth of God has wrought its full effect on the human soul, the prevailing note, even of the earthly life, will be that of joy. The near presence of the heavenly Father, the close friendship of the Divine Redeemer, the happy service of love, the blessed work of doing good, the exulting hope of heavenly bliss,—these are sources of joy which quicken and animate the soul, which make a holy human life radiant with a blessedness which anticipates the glory of the skies.—C.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The privilege of the strong.* In this strenuous and vigorous appeal we have—

I. THE COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. In it are the weak as well as the strong. There is nothing whatever that is narrow about the Christian faith. It is not adapted to any particular class or character. In Jesus Christ there is neither male nor female, Greek nor Jew, cultivated nor uncultivated, bond nor free. And in him there is no favour reserved for *any special disposition*. It is not a gospel for those in particular who are most admired of men—for the strong, for the brave, for the wise, for the winning; it is a refuge for the weak, for the timid, for the unknown and the unbeloved. Those who are of no account at all amongst men, those whom human leaders would gladly leave out of their army as weakening rather than strengthening their forces,—these are all welcome to flock to the standard and to fight under the banner of the heavenly Prince.

II. THE PRIVILEGE OF THE STRONG. Untaught by the truth of Christ, unchanged by his Spirit, it has been considered the privilege of the strong (1) to despise the weak; (2) to displace them and to enjoy their portion; (3) to delight in playing the part of despot over them. These have been the uses which the strong have made of their strength. But we have not so learned Christ. So far as we possess his Spirit and have any right to bear his Name, we shall count it our privilege: 1. *To show them a genuine sympathy;* remembering that often, if not always, their weakness reflects no discredit on them, and our strength no credit on ourselves. 2. *To render them effectual succour;* to grant them needful protection and guidance, to instil courage into their minds, to impart vigour to their souls, to make them partakers of our own strength. We shall say to them, speaking in more ways than one, "Be strong."

III. THE MAIN SOURCE OF THEIR SUCCOUR. The strong will help the weak: 1. By offering them the honour which is their due, instead of the disdain to which they have been accustomed. The former elevates, the latter crushes. 2. By their inspiriting example. Walking with them, working or struggling by their side, the fellowship which they afford imparts a constant access of strength to their soul. 3. By words of wise encouragement. And of these the best and the most effective will be those which bring out the nearness and the salvation of God. "Behold, your God will come . . . and save you." If we would do our very best to strenthen the weak, we must bring

them into conscious relation to the Divine Source of all power. Let men realize that God is with them and for them, and they will be strong to do the bravest deeds and to endure the sharpest sufferings.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The way to Zion.* The outward incidents of the Jewish people have a singularly close correspondence with the inward experiences of human souls in Christian times. The captivity in Egypt and also that in Babylon find their analogue in the state of spiritual bondage which is the constant penalty of sin. The way back to Jerusalem stands for our homeward pilgrimage as we travel to the city of the blessed. As here described, there are several features in which the one answers strikingly and instructively to the other.

I. THE HIGHWAY TO THE HEAVENLY CITY. In all his dealings with man God has been constructing a highway from bondage to spiritual freedom, from sin to holiness, from guilty selfishness to sacred service, from utter ruin to complete salvation, from earth to heaven. He was engaged in this beneficent, Divine procedure when he spake to us through the patriarchs, when he instituted the Law, when he gave to us his prophets. And he completed this "way" when he "sent forth his Son." Jesus Christ had so much to do with preparing for us the highway to the heavenly city that we appropriately speak of him, as indeed he spoke of himself, as actually *being the Way itself* (John xiv. 6). He, *the Truth*, is the Way by which we have a knowledge of God and of his will. He, *the Mediator*, is the Way by which we ourselves come into close spiritual contact with God himself. He, *the Propitiation*, is the Way by which we ascend to forgiveness and reconciliation. He, *the Life*, is the Way by which we rise into loving union with, and growing likeness to, and ultimate preparedness for, the Divine Father.

II. THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HEAVENWARD WAY. 1. Here is that which is paradoxical, but true withal; for this homeward way is characterized by *breadth*. It is the broad "highway," the open road, along which all travellers are free to pass. There is no such exclusiveness about it as is often found in the ways *we* construct. It is for all classes of society, for all nations and races of mankind, for men who have lived all kinds of human lives, for men of all tempers and dispositions; the "King's highway" has ample room for them all. 2. But it is also, strangely though not inconsistently, characterized by *narrowness*. "And a way," *i.e. a path*, an elevated and narrow causeway along which only one or two can walk abreast. About this way of life there is a narrowness of its own (see Matt. vii. 13, 14; Luke xiii. 24). (1) Its gateway can only be entered by one at a time. Men do not enter into the kingdom of God in regiments or companies, but as separate and individual souls (see Gal. vi. 5). (2) No man can enter in swollen with pride, or carrying his vices with him, or wrapped round with selfishness. It is "the way of holiness," "the unclean shall not pass over it." 3. It is also characterized by *directness*. A man, "though a fool, shall not err therein." There is no serious difficulty here. Mysteries there are which are insoluble, but these can be left alone—they will keep for a future time. But what the will of God is in Jesus Christ, how he would have us order our life, what manner of men we ought to be in order to please him,—this is as clear and plain as it could be. The little child, the man who is little better than "a fool," need not miss his way in travelling to the heavenly city.

III. THE IMMUNITY AND THE COMMUNION OF THE WAY. 1. *Immunity.* "No lion shall be there." Not that there is no adversary to be found in the way to Zion. The evil one himself, as a roaring lion, haunts the path of life. But there will be found no temptation which belongs peculiarly and especially to the heavenward way, as is the case with other paths. In the path of financial success is the lion of covetousness or avarice; in the path of fame is that of vanity; in the way of professional success is that of complacency, etc.; but in the way of holiness is no especial "lion" which frequents that road. It is morally and spiritually safe. 2. *Communion.* There is (1) fellowship with the holy. "The redeemed shall walk there." And there is also and above all (2) fellowship with God himself; with the Divine Friend of man. "He shall be with them" (marginal reading); *he* shall be with them—he—

> "Leader of faithful souls, and Guide
> Of all who travel to the sky."

C.

Ver. 10.—*Within the gates.* If the two preceding verses may be regarded as descriptive of the Christian pilgrimage, the text may appropriately be treated as pictorial of the heavenly city in which that journey ends. The language of this verse suggests to us—

I. THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF THOSE WHO ARE ADMITTED. They are "the ransomed of the Lord." They were in spiritual bondage: they have been redeemed by a Divine Deliverer; they have been ransomed at a great price; they have been rescued from the power of their enemies (outward and inward) and walk in liberty, thankful for what they have escaped from, anticipating the more perfect freedom and the more excellent estate they are travelling toward.

II. THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CITY ITSELF. "Shall come to Zion." 1. *It is the very home of God.* Jerusalem was "the city of God"—it was the place on earth which he chose for his manifested presence. There, in a peculiar sense, he abode; there, as in no other city, he was approached and was worshipped; there, as nowhere else, men felt that they stood in his near presence and rejoiced in fellowship with him. The heavenly Zion is to be to all who shall be received within its gates *the place where God is*, the home of the living and reigning Saviour. There we are to be "at home with the Lord." 2. *It is the place of perfect security and of transcendent beauty.* The "mountains were round about Jerusalem," and "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, was Mount Zion." The heavenly city, of which it is the earthly type, will prove a home of *absolute security*, into which no enemy will ever come, from which temptation and sin are safely barred (see Rev. xxi. 27); and of *surpassing beauty and glory* (Rev. xxi. 1, 10, 11, 18, 19, 23). There shall be everything which will give pure and inexhaustible delight to all holy souls, to those in whom has been planted and nourished the appreciation of that which is really beautiful and glorious.

III. THE JOY WHICH WILL ATTEND ADMISSION. They "shall come to Zion with songs." How transcendent must that moment be when the human soul is assured, by actual sight of the heavenly city, that immortal glory is his blest estate!

IV. THE FULL AND ABIDING BLESSEDNESS OF THE CELESTIAL HOME. "Everlasting joy . . . sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Here are the two grand essentials of perfect blessedness. 1. *The absence of all that mars.* Here many a "goodly heritage" loses half its value to the possessor of it by reason of some one serious drawback; it is some bodily infirmity, or it is some grave anxiety, or it is some keen disappointment, or it is some irreparable loss which, though everything else be fair and fruitful, makes life seem to have as much of shadow as of sunshine. There, sorrow and sighing shall have fled away. 2. *The presence of lasting and ever-growing joy.* Here, with the constitution of our mind and with the fading of our faculty, pleasure palls, joys fade and disappear. After a few decades life becomes less and less valuable, until it is felt to be a burden that can ill be borne. There, it is an "everlasting song," and instead of its strain becoming *less* tuneful or inspiriting, the enlarging and unfolding powers of our immortal manhood will make the heavenly life *more* musical and rapturous as the years and the centuries are left behind us.—C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Changed circumstances following the return of Divine favour.* This, which is expressed in the figures of these verses, may be further illustrated by the experience of David. His "bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long," while God hid his face from him. He sang again the old songs when God "restored unto him the joy of his salvation." "In contrast to the ruin of Edom, the prophet now describes Israel's triumphant march home through the blossoming wilderness" (Matthew Arnold). Two points may be dwelt on. 1. God's favour often includes improved circumstances. 2. God's favour brings such cheer as lifts us above circumstances.

I. GOD'S FAVOUR OFTEN INCLUDES IMPROVED CIRCUMSTANCES. The actual removal of our difficulties or hindrances; restored relationships; business prosperities, etc.;—all such things being poetically represented by the bare, dry desert becoming a watered, flowery garden. In actual fact, the weariness and danger of the long desert route were graciously mitigated and relieved for the returning exiles. Cheyne resists the reference to the exiles; but the same point may be illustrated if the picture of the text be that of the condition of desolated Judæa when God's favour rested on the remnant that remained there. The contrast may be between desolated Edom on which rested God's

frown, and refreshed and revived Judæa on which rested God's favour. So when God's curse is taken off Palestine, the old blossom and beauty will return to her. We cannot always be sure that God's smile on our souls will be followed by improvement of our circumstances; but this great comfort we may take—God oftentimes does in this way seal and complete his mercies to his people.

II. GOD'S FAVOUR BRINGS SUCH CHEER AS LIFTS US ABOVE CIRCUMSTANCES. It is very easy to say that we ought to rise above circumstances in our own strength. But we cannot do it; nobody ever really does it, however loud may be their boastings. The bond uniting body and mind, soul and life, is altogether too close and subtle to permit even the holiest man to cease to feel. What alone is possible is that God's favour and grace may be such an inspiration and strength to a man's spirit, or a man's will, that he may be able to control his circumstances, and even change them through the new and masterful relation in which he stands to them. God's favour and acceptance is man's supreme uplifting. There is no cheer, no strength, like that which comes to the man who can say, "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge." That man, and that man alone, can *do* all things, and *bear* all things, and make life yield to him its best.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Cheer for the faint-hearted.* This term may well be applied either to the small remnant left in Judæa, or to the small company that represented the exiled nation on the return to Jerusalem. The cheer comes through the assurance of God's direct and gracious relations with them. Faint-hearted ones can only be steadied by leaning on the Strong One for strength. The prayer of all such should be this, "O Lord, I am oppressed, *undertake thou for me.*" Introduction may include the reasons for faint-heartedness which these people had who are here addressed; and the corresponding reasons for faint-heartedness which now may press upon us. We have times, like those which Job knew, when everybody and everything seems to be against us; we have to suffer much through the wrong-doing of others; and the frailty of our bodies often makes us write bitter things against ourselves. Our hope is in God. He sends cheering assurances.

I. WE HAVE THIS GOOD CHEER—GOD LIVES. Even if we are as nearly shipwrecked as the Apostle Paul, and for days and nights together neither sun nor stars appear, the fact cannot be altered, the sun is there behind those clouds; they cannot blot him out. In our troublous and weary times men may bruise us sorely with their taunts, "Where is now thy God?" But taunts cannot push him from his place, and blot him from our sky. He is there, behind the cloud, if his time is *not yet.* We shall praise him.

II. WE HAVE THIS GOOD CHEER—GOD IS FOR US. He is on our side. "Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We have a champion, a "Great Heart" pilgrim's guide. "Greater is he who is with us than all that can be against us." And if we are still placed under disabilities and burdens, we keep this confidence—seeing God is for us, he must know that it is better for us to let the burdens stay than to remove them. He could remove them; it is enough for us that he does not.

III. WE HAVE THIS GOOD CHEER—GOD IS WITH US. His is not a grace and help which we may have on appeal merely; it is a grace and strength which are our constant possession. "The Lord of hosts is *with* us." We are safely defended; we are wisely inspired; we possess all things—"all are ours"—for we have God.

IV. WE HAVE THIS GOOD CHEER—GOD IS IN US. This is the deeper Christian view, and opens up the Pauline teaching, "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me;" and, we may even say, the teaching of our Lord himself. Cheer for the faint-hearted follows our response to this appeal, "Abide in me, and I in you."—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—*Pre-visions of the Great Physician.* These may be poetical figures, designed to present, in an impressive way, a time of great national joy; but we cannot fail to recognize in them foreshadowings of the miracles of healing and of grace that were wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ. The first and general meaning of the passage may be that, "so conspicuous and overpowering would be the interference of God on behalf of his people, those of the most obtuse intellect could not fail to perceive it. So joyous would be the event, that persons the most unlikely would participate in the

exultation." But, for spiritual readers, there must be a second and further meaning, for the language too well suits that time when "the blind saw, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, and the dead were raised." Reading the mission of Christ from this prophecy as a text, we note—

I. CHRIST REMOVING MEN'S DISABILITIES. All are typified in these failures of the senses of sight, hearing, walking, and speaking. Some of the human disabilities are hereditary, others are brought on by men's own negligences or wilfulnesses. But this is to be specially noticed, they are all the direct products and results of *sin*. And Christ only designed to impress on men the greatness of his work as Redeemer from sin, by showing them how vigorously he would deal with all sin's consequences.

II. CHRIST GIVING LIFE TO THE DEAD. Death is the supreme, and apparently resistless triumph of sin. Before it man stands utterly hopeless. But Christ does not. He speaks, and Lazarus comes forth, bound with the grave-clothes. He even submits himself to the worst that death can do, and then breaks the bars of his prison-house asunder. There is nothing he cannot do for us.

III. CHRIST REVEALING GOD'S WORK IN SOULS. We only read our Lord's life aright when we see it to be illustration of permanent spiritual facts. God is always coming and saving men. He has always been coming and saving men. Prophets, by their miracles (such as Elisha's), in part illustrated God's soul-saving work; but the "Lord Jesus gives the full, sublime, ever-suggestive illustration." God gives *life* from the "death of trespasses and sins." God removes the soul-disabilities which sin has brought in its train. This opens up the consideration of our Lord's position as Mediator, doing, for God, his part of this great work in souls; and further of the mission of the Spirit, as Comforter, Inspirer, and Teacher. Verily God works wonders of grace in the souls of men.—R. T.

Ver. 8.—*The Lord's highway.* Under the figure of deliverance from Assyria and Babylon the times of Messiah are foreshadowed. From the previous verses we get suggestions of his miracles of healing, and assurances that he will supply grace to men like abundant fountains in thirsty places. The figure of a "way" was even used by Christ himself. He said, "I am the Way"—the way to the Father; the way of salvation; the way of holiness; the way to glory, "bringing many sons unto glory." Spiritualizing the way described in this text, we may note—

I. THE HIGHWAY OF SALVATION IS A RAISED WAY. A made way; one actually lifted up, levelled, prepared. This is the idea in the Hebrew word. We must distinguish between the ordinary Eastern path, a mere track in the sand or the soil, and the road carefully made for a royal progress, valleys raised, mountains levelled, stones removed. Such a road is Christ's way of life and salvation for us. All hindrances are taken out of the way, and a plain path is laid before our feet. There are some points of view from which the way of life appears as a "strait gate" opening on to a narrow path. But from other points of view it is a broad, open road, which none can mistake. This may lead to consideration of the work of the Lord Jesus which was, as it were, the making of the way of life.

II. THE HIGHWAY OF SALVATION IS A HOLY WAY. There is no possibility of our treading it with the uncleanness of wilful sin, kept sin, upon us. Sinners may tread it, but they must be penitent sinners. And a penitent man, so far as heart and purpose are concerned, is a holy man. Imperfect saints may tread it, but only if their heart is set on holiness. Only if they are "clean every whit," but needing to "wash their feet."

III. THE HIGHWAY OF SALVATION IS A SIMPLE WAY. "The wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err therein." The difficulties we make; they are not really in the way. The way of salvation seems to wise people full of mystery, yet it is grasped by the wayfaring, the fool, the child. None need miss the way, for it is thoroughly well fitted with directions and guide-posts. We may blind ourselves, and refuse to see them. We may put obstacles in our own path. The one great obstacle takes many forms. What we really want is to keep our wilfulness; to make a way of our own; to get God to save us on our own terms. There is the highway open right before us, and we persist in looking this way and that, if so be we may find any way but Christ's way of penitence and faith.—R. T.

Ver. 10.—*The return of the ransomed.* "Whoever is familiar with the bold and magnificent character of the prophetic style will not deem the liberation from the Captivity an event too trivial to be predicted in the language here employed." "Minor and temporary deliverances are not only emblems of the great salvation, but preparatory to it." "The first volume of Isaiah's prophecy closes fitly with this transcendent picture, carrying the thoughts of men beyond any possible earthly fulfilment. The outward imagery probably had its starting-point in the processions of the pilgrims who came up to the temple singing psalms, like those known as the 'songs of degrees,' at their successive halting-places." Very strange is the fascination which the "future" exercises on men. It is a "Will-o'-the-wisp" which is ever enticing men on.

"At first Time made nought but to-day
With its joys, its successes, and sorrow;
Then, to keep on good terms with the world,
He promised he'd make a to-morrow."

No man is really satisfied. He is always hoping for something to happen in the future. And so he is lifted onwards towards the eternal, and in his very restlessness he reveals his immortality. Illustrate from the romance of the child, the ambition of the apprentice, the outlooking of the man, the persistent hopes of the Jewish race. This onlooking is peculiarly characteristic of the Christian, who has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The Christian's best is in the eternal.

I. THE PEOPLE. "Ransomed of the Lord." The word reminds us of the prisoner and the slave. It may properly be applied in a religious sense, because the Bible represents men as "in bondage," and as "redeemed." "Sold under sin." "Ye were the servants of sin." "Gave his life a ransom." 1. *Observe from what bondage we are ransomed.* Describe the wretched condition of the slave. How much worse is the condition of the slaves of sin, drink, lust, evil passions, or selfish worldliness! There is a peculiar degradation and a certain final ruin involved in the supreme service of *self*. "Whosoever committeth sin is the *slave* of sin." 2. *By whom were we ransomed?* "Of the Lord." It was a glorious day for England when she broke the fetters of the slave, and let the oppressed go free. It would be thought a great thing for a king to bend down and with his own hands release the slave. Yet God's own Son, God himself "manifest," is our Deliverer. When "there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, his eye pitied and his arm brought salvation." We sing, as Moses did, "The Lord is become my Salvation." 3. *At what price has the ransom been accomplished?* "Not with corruptible things," but with "the precious blood of Christ." Illustrate the supreme efforts that are often made to raise a ransom price; but what is all the wealth in the world compared with Jesus, who was given for us? Surely such a ransom involves that some great blessedness is yet in store for us.

II. THE PLEDGE OF RETURN. "Shall return." It is the word of the living God. Israel, while in captivity, may fully rest upon the Lord's promises. There is a sense in which we may regard ourselves as the "ransomed of the Lord," left for a while in the land of bondage until our home is ready; and while we wait we have comforting assurances in: 1. The work of Jesus: which is represented as being still carried on for us in the heavenly places. 2. The work of the Holy Ghost, who is our Seal, our Earnest, our Sanctifier, unto the day of redemption. 3. The promises of God, which are "exceeding great and precious promises," and which are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus."

III. THE RETURN. (For the figures of Israel going to the temple for the feasts, see Ps. CXX.—CXXVI.) Picture the scene of the journey of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem. "Songs and everlasting joy" they know. 1. Theirs is the joy of ransomed ones. Illustrate by the ecstasy of the freed bird, the liberated prisoner, the escaped slave. 2. Theirs is the joy of conquerors. Over sin and self and the world. Illustrate by the triumph of a general returning to his country. 3. Theirs is the joy of those who are going home. Illustrate by the schoolboy, or the traveller, nearing the time for home.

"As when the weary traveller gains
The height of some o'er-looking hill,
The sight his fainting spirit cheers,
He eyes his home though distant still."

IV. THE HOME. "Zion." Our "Father's house." "Is it a place?" we often ask. We know little about it. God gives us only figures and pictures which appeal to imagination. The text gives two aspects of it. 1. "*Sorrow and sighing flee away.*" Sorrow comes out of (1) separations; (2) infirmities; (3) death; (4) sin. "There the weary are at rest."

"The pilgrims enter the city like worn sky-birds to their nests."

2. *They obtain joy and gladness.* This they have through (1) exalted powers; (2) established purity; (3) intercourse with the loved ones of their human fellowship; (4) nobler and higher service; and (5) the vision, the presence, the smile, of Jesus. They are "ever with the Lord."—R. T.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

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